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CONQUERING TIME:

A. AKHMATOVA'S *POEM WITHOUT A HERO*

AND T.S. ELIOT'S *FOUR QUARTETS*

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The work presented in this doctoral dissertation is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original and my own work, except as acknowledged in the text. The work in this dissertation has not been submitted, either in whole or in part, for a degree at this or any other university.

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Introduction

At the rise of World War II, both Thomas Stearns Eliot and Anna Akhmatova chose the power of poetry to impart their witnessing of the coming tragedy. Separated by thousands of kilometres and the Iron Curtain, never having met or communicated, they created the poems, *Four Quartets* and *Poem Without a Hero*, that were to consummate their long and prosperous creative careers. By this time, both had already gained international respect.

Eliot first made himself known with "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" (1915), whose unique language altered the poetic idiom. With *The Waste Land* in 1922, Eliot became established as one of the most prominent figures of Western Modernism. The experimental nature of *The Waste Land* served as the validation of Modernist aesthetics.

Although there are certain parallels between *The Waste Land* and *Four Quartets* (1943), the contrasts between them outweigh the similarities. *The Waste Land* addresses World War I and its aftermath as well as Eliot's personal disillusionment and that of his generation with modernity's spiritual emptiness. No less influential is Eliot's work as an essayist, critic, and editor. These roles allowed him to deepen his impact on Modernism because he together with Ezra Pound were to define many of the literary insights of the time and introduce the public to new poetic talents. In terms of his poetics, the *Quartets* become the culmination of his poetic creativity. After the *Quartets,* he did not write another major poem.

Similarly, Akhmatova was already a well-known poet when she started writing *Poem Without a Her*o (1940). She published her first collection, *Evening*, in 1912, and immediately obtained national recognition. For some time, her poetry had been concerned with her intimate challenges and discoveries, but after the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905), Akhmatova turned to events which were relevant to all of her generation. From that time, she began her transformation into the voice of all the Russians, national heroine and prophetess. This voice grew even stronger after the Revolution of 1917, when Akhmatova wrote her most emblematic poems. Witnessing the terror that the communists brought upon her country, she created one of her best-known testimonies, *Requiem* (1935-1940). Here, Akhmatova used the strength of her talent to speak up for all those forced to keep silent while their fathers, wives, children were torn apart in front of them. This creative speaking out when few dared gained her the respect of her people, many of whom felt compelled to express their gratitude personally, or in letters.

Both Eliot and Akhmatova were devoutly Christian. Eliot formally converted when he was thirty-nine years old, having already gained world recognition as a prominent Modernist author. Akhmatova was born Orthodox but became fully engaged with the Orthodox tradition later in life, a conscious choice when the Soviet State had proclaimed all religions deceitful and illegal.

Eliot and Akhmatova had similar tastes in the arts. Both revered Dante and his crowning work, *The Divine Comedy*, as well as Shakespeare and French Symbolism. There were contemporary influences too. Akhmatova was one of the founders of Acmeism, a movement often compared to the Imagism which exerted a prevailing influence on Eliot when he began his poetic career. Although

Akhmatova was considerably more involved in Acmeism than Eliot in Imagism, the principles of the movements reveal their techniques and interests. The importance of clarity and attachment to an ancient tradition is evident in both as it is in *Poem Without a Hero* and *Four Quartets*.

Time and history became the focus of the *Poem* and *Quartets* due to the poets' shared worldview. More generally, their investment in time is also related to the epoch they witnessed. The twentieth century became the moment for redefining almost all fundamental concepts. While new achievements in science and technology were gathering momentum, they were often overshadowed by the horrors of the World Wars.

In the face of these new struggles, many Modernist thinkers sought a new way of being in a drastically changed world. Such philosophers as José Ortega y Gasset, Robin George Collingwood, Benedetto Croce, Henri Bergson, and Martin Heidegger came up with the new interpretations of history. For the Modernists, history ceased to be a mere collection of facts and events and instead became a matter of highly subjective interpretation.

My intention to draw a parallel between Eliot and Akhmatova in particular is motivated by several reasons. Firstly, it creates a bridge between Anglo-American and Russian Modernism. As I will explain in Chapter two, Modernism is a unique movement in many senses, given the difficulty of defining it within its geographical and historical context. Thus, the close reading of these Anglo-American and Russian authors serves as further proof of the unprecedented multidimensionality of Modernism, in terms of space, background, and historical process.

Secondly, such a connection strengthens each poet's argument in the *Quartets* and *Poem*. Both Eliot and Akhmatova are celebrated authors, especially in their respective languages, and their voices and ideas have always drawn attention. Individually, they are true masters of poetry and philosophical thought. Read in conjunction, their voices engage in a dialogue, which begs for analysis. As I demonstrate in Chapter one, though their lived experience was vastly different, their independent worldviews complete each other. Exploring the two poems side by side enriches the potential for new perceptions of each of these texts.

Lastly, this parallel was suggested by Akhmatova herself. In her memoirs, she mentions Charlie Chaplin, the Eiffel Tower, and Eliot as all being "born" in the same year as herself (Polivanov, 6). In her conversations with Anatoly Nayman and Lydia Chukovskaya, she referred to Eliot as her "little brother", seeing him as her soulmate. Besides, *Four Quartets* can be seen as one of the influences on *Poem Without a Hero*, for Akhmatova was presented with Eliot's poem while working on hers. All these factors contribute to this project, where the two texts (if not the two poets) are to be read as mutually significant and illuminating even though Eliot was not familiar with Akhmatova's poems. As Nancy Gish points out in *Time in the Poetry of T.S. Eliot*: "Because Eliot's poetry is rich and complex, it must be seen from many perspectives and our understanding must be continually renewed" (viii). The present dissertation seeks to do precisely this, to offer a fresh view on *Four Quartets* comparing it with *Poem Without a Hero*.

To reference Akhmatova while reading Eliot sheds new light on the latter. The principles of Acmeism, Nikolai Berdyaev's philosophy, Christianity in its

Modernist, free-thinking understanding, and the text of *Poem Without Hero* itself allows *Four Quartets* to be read as instructive, even dogmatic at times, yet remarkably hopeful. The contrast with the *Poem* makes the *Quartets* more illuminating with its Dantesque belief in a final *paradiso*; the comparison between the two makes more evident the *purgatorio* of humankind's present state and the long-awaited need for transformation.

There is an abundance of studies on Eliot and Akhmatova in English and Russian, respectively. Ever since the rise of his poetic talent, Eliot's work has been exhaustively analysed. The gravity and complexity of his work has seen a steadily increasing number of articles and books on his life, poetry, and essays. Some of the most canonical views have been elaborated by Helen Gardner. She is the author of several works, dedicated to Eliot, one of the most celebrated being *The Art of T.S. Eliot* (1968). Here she focuses primarily on *Four Quartets* as the central masterpiece of Eliot's career, while the preceding work is interpreted as a preparation for creating the *Quartets*. Bernard Bergonzi presents a concise overview of Eliot's life and work in his *T.S. Eliot* (1972) drawing on earlier overlooked sources, such as the poet's early criticism and journalism. *Thomas Stearns Eliot: The Poet* (1979) by David Moody opts for a broader reading of Eliot yet is primarily concerned with reading the poems through Eliot's criticism thus paying less attention than Gardner or Bergonzi to the poet's personal and emotional life. Christopher Rick's *T.S. Eliot and Prejudice* (1988) throws new light on a better understanding of Eliot's body of beliefs. Ricks does succeed in illuminating Eliot's criticism with previously missed meanings by being scrupulously attentive to the poet's choice of words and intonation. In the long list of Eliotian critics, Lyndall

Gordon stands out as a pioneer in demonstrating the role of Emily Hale in Eliot's work, only recently confirmed by the newly revealed letters between Eliot and Hale. This role finds one of its finest illustrations in Gordon's *The Imperfect Life of T.S. Eliot* (1998). Further research into what is hidden in the life and work of Eliot is found in Robert Schuchard's *Eliot's Dark Angel: Intersections of Life and Art* (1999). Exploring Eliot's poetry through his emotional and spiritual struggles, the study testifies to the consistency of the poet's beliefs, which allowed him to develop the theory of moral criticism. Manu Jain's *T.S. Eliot and American Philosophy* (1993) is the fundamental analysis that elucidates Eliot's philosophical studies which were to inform both his critical thought and poems.

Eliot's friends, such as Stephen Spender and Robert Sencourt, left us with memories of Eliot. The former was one of the poetic talents discovered by Eliot, when he was an editor at Faber&Faber. As if wishing to defend his mentor, Spender in *Eliot* (1972) at times dedicates too much space to social and political commentary yet his book is of great value as it is one of very few that presents first-hand evidence on Eliot, his life, and beliefs. A no less personal account is offered by Sencourt's *T.S. Eliot: Memoir* (1971). Having met Eliot in 1927, Sencourt remained his friend for many years. As Sencourt knew Eliot mostly in his middle age, this memoir is particularly concerned with the years between 1927 and the 1940s. It needs mentioning that Eliot did not like and even discouraged the idea of having his biography written. As of today, before Lyndall Gordon's studies, Peter Ackroyd's *T.S. Eliot. A Life* (1961) is the first book of this kind.

A recent two-volume edition of Eliot's poems and other works (2015),with commentary by Ricks and Jim McCue[1], as well as eight volumes of his complete prose (2014-2019), edited by Schuchard and a team of scholars[2], demonstrate the on-going interest in this eminent figure of Modernism.

Akhmatova studies in the West are fewer. Amanda Haight's *Anna Akhmatova: A Poetic Pilgrimage* (1976) was the first biography of the poet. Hence, the first account of Akhmatova's life was published in English outside the poet's homeland. The biography is valuable because of the profound analysis that Haight offers. In *Anna Akhmatova: Poet and Prophet* (1994), Roberta Reeder analyses the poet's life and work with unsurpassed thoroughness. Nancy Anderson's main achievement, on the other hand, is in the translation and interpretation of Akhmatova's poetry. In *The Word That Causes Death's Defeat: Poems of Memory* (2004), Anderson aims at reverberating Akhmatova's voice in English through accurately placing the work of translation in relation to the poet's life and surroundings. Elaine Feinstein's *Anna of all the Russias: The Life of Anna Akhmatova* (2006) draws on a mass of new material, such as interviews with those who knew her, previously censored archives, and newly discovered letters. The title of this study became Akhmatova's own title.

[1] *The Poems of T.S. Eliot. Volume I,* ed. by Christopher Ricks and Jim McCue (2015).
[2] *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition,* ed by Ronald Schuchard et al. (2014-2019)

Russian-speaking scholars of Akhmatova's life and work are numerous, Roman Timenchik and Mikhail Kralin[3] being the primary references. Kralin edited a selection of poems, letters, essays, and memoirs related to Akhmatova published under the title *Ob Anne Akhmatovoi* (*About Anna Akhmatova*) in 1990. This was one of the first Akhmatova studies, which had been effectively silenced throughout the Soviet era. Timenchik studies are more recent, one of particular interest being *Anna Akhmatova v 1960-e godi* (*Anna Akhmatova in the 1960s*). The book is a curious compilation of Timenchik's commentary and Akhmatova's quotations alongside those of her friends, acquaintances, and enemies.

Important biographical material can be found the journals of Lydia Chukovskaya, Akhmatova's close friend, and the memoirs by Anatoly Nayman[4], her disciple. Chukovskaya's *Zapiski ob Anne Akhmatovoi* (*Anna Akhmatova's Journals*, 1972) is an essential read for any Akhmatovian scholar, as it provides a first-hand witnessing of the poet, her thoughts and opinions. It also documents the horrors that Akhmatova shared with her people under the communist state. Nayman's *Remembering Anna Akhmatova* (1991) is somewhat reminiscent of Spender's take on Eliot, that of a disciple, although the influence of Akhmatova on Nayman is considerably more evident than Eliot's on Spender.

[3] In Russian: Тименчик Р., *Анна Ахматова в 1960-е годы* (2005), Кралин, М., *Об Анне Ахматоваой* (1990).

[4] In Russian: Чуковская, Л. *Записки об Анне Ахматовой* (1972), Найман, А., *Воспоминания о Анне Ахматовой* (1991).

The difference in published research on the two poets in their respective languages is noteworthy. Anglo-American criticism of Eliot's work offers an academic perspective, which prevails over more biographical studies. Akhmatova, on the other hand, is too often the focus of quite provocative biographies and articles, written by academics, journalists, and publicists.[5] This contrast in criticism can be explained by several factors, one being the lack of similarity in the poets' lifestyles. Akhmatova's biography is rich in relationships with some of the most famous people of her time; they raise curiosity, and, therefore have an ample readership. The secrecy that still surrounds Soviet times adds to such a focus as many theories and facts regarding Akhmatova's life, and by extension, the lives of many of her fellow countrymen, have not yet been revealed.

Furthermore, censorship was for a long time a serious obstacle to Akhmatova studies, and even now they are partly prejudicial. Eliot scholars, though not immune to subjectivity and biases of sorts, tend to aim at research-supported claims, while some of Akhmatova scholarship takes a Soviet-style perspective on her as a person and poet.

The interest in Akhmatova's personality rather than her talents has created memoirs and even myths. Thanks to her friends and disciples, the researchers find an abundance of material concerning her thoughts and emotions though not all

[5] For instance, in 2014, Ekaterina Mishanenkova released *Anna Akhmatova: Psichoanalys Monakhini y Bludnitsi* (*Anna Akhmatova: The Psychoanalysis of a Nun and Whore*), in which the author attempts a frivolous, almost fictional portrayal of Akhmatova from a pseudo-psychological point of view. However, the example of Tamara Kataeva's *Anti-Akhmatova* (2007)[5] is even more striking. The book whose only goal is to demonise the poet has already seen four editions.

sources are equally trustworthy. Nonetheless, the compilation of memoirs and the poet's own letters and notes depict a complex and detailed portrait of the person behind the poems.

Eliot scholars, regrettably, are not presented with such opportunities. There are fragments that allow assumptions to be made, but his portrait is far from complete. Unlike Akhmatova, he left few personal diaries and a massive collection of letters in 9 volumes (1898-1941), however the existing biographies do not provide first-hand testimony. If Chukovskaya and Nayman edited their books based on their diary entries, Sencourt and Spender wrote theirs later in life.

Thus, there are significant gaps in the studies of both poets. Eliot's persona is largely inaccessible, which complicates a biographical approach to his work. While there are some evident parallels between his personal and creative lives, their meaning and interpretation are mostly left to scholars' judgement. For Akhmatova, the problem is the lack of substantial research on the origins of her poetry. If Eliot's philosophy and literary borrowings have been widely discussed, Akhmatova is more often examined on her own, or in comparison to other women poets, or to Acmeists. Olga Ushakova has published several articles, in Russian and English, on the link between Akhmatova and Eliot, including "A word which is not mine": T. S. Eliot's 'The Waste Land' and Akhmatova's 'Poem without a Hero'" (2016). Thus, this thesis aims at overcoming some limitations in Eliot and Akhmatova research to date. Read in comparison to *Poem without a Hero*, Eliot's *Quartets* proves reassuring in tone yet as impersonal as the poet himself intended to remain. The same comparison illuminates Akhmatova's verse in its more explicit link to the

poet's experiences and almost desperate conclusions. My research will focus on the notion of time in the poetry of T.S. Eliot and Anna Akhmatova, in *Four Quartets* and *Poem Without a Hero*. By establishing a connection between two of the most influential poets of the twentieth century and reading their texts in parallel, I intend to shed new light on the reception of the poems and propose an enriched understanding of their focal point, time.

Consequently, the applied methodology includes several perspectives. I offer an intertextual approach based on the close reading of the poems. As an intertextual analysis, it falls into the category of comparative studies with connections to philosophy and its relation to literature. Through the paradigms elaborated by Heraclitus, mystics such as St. John of the Cross, Henri Bergson, Martin Heidegger, Paul Ricoeur, Nikolai Berdyaev, to mention a few, the reading of the *Poem* and *Quartets* is enhanced with a richer understanding of the poets' worldviews.

This thesis is divided into ten chapters. The first, "Same Era, Different Worlds", provides a biographical outline, which introduces the context in (and despite) which they created these poems. My goal is to explain some of the allusions of the texts and to establish the initial parallels between the two poets. The parallels are scarce: the significance of water for the two poets as they grew up close it, the conscious devotion to Christianity, and the ordeals of World War II.

Chapter two "Modernism in Modernity" is a general overview of Modernism and more specifically, Acmeism, Imagism, and Vorticism which were to have a bearing on Akhmatova and Eliot. The chapter does not provide a complete picture of the processes dominating and influencing Modernism in Russia and in Anglo-

American countries, rather, it primarily focuses on movements associated with the two poets and leaves aside many others that, although they may have been significant for Modernism in general, are less important in studying Eliot and Akhmatova. As this chapter demonstrates, Imagism and Vorticism have a lot in common with Acmeism, as the three of them strive for clarity and intend to establish a dialogue with the whole of cultural tradition.

In the next chapter, "Structure", the two poems are discussed from the point of view of their inner organisation. While not identical, the *Poem* and *Quartets* share the general paradigm, which can be traced to Dante's *The Divine Comedy*. In the way in which the poems refer to various historical epochs the texts highlight the interrelation of time and its dimensions. Besides, both poems overcome the opposition of time and space uniting the two notions in one complex, which reflects the poets' vision of the world as a unified system. The numerous structural differences allow us first glance at the contrast in tonalities of the two poems. The four parts of the *Quartets* echo music and transmit reassurance and hope through the precision of the structure of the poem. The threefold *Poem Without a Hero*, on the other hand, is of a considerably more fragmentary nature, allowing for little hopefulness.

Chapter four, "Change and Time", focuses on some of the most basic understandings of time as a bearer of change and as a yardstick of transformation. The poems constantly address these views on time and prove similar in their verdict that change is inevitable and thus, the need to be aware of the constant flux, to use Heraclitus's concept, that surrounds and shapes human life.

In chapter five, "Historical Time", *Poem Without a Hero* and *Four Quartets* are read as testimony to the history that Akhmatova and Eliot lived and observed. Ricoeur's theory of the relation between history, memory, and forgetting sheds new light on the multidimensionality of the history portrayed in the poems. Having witnessed the horrors of the twentieth century, two world wars, and in the case of Akhmatova, a civil war together with the rise of totalitarianism, the two poets try to find a way of redemption from "the terrors of history" to use Eliade's phrase.

Some of the most significant images that bring out the awaking of Eliot's and Akhmatova's poetic personae are ghosts. Belonging to the two poets' past but interrupting their present, the ghosts simultaneously unite within themselves various temporal dimensions and bring in the text the feelings of guilt and personal responsibility. Two of the ghosts also represent a hoped-for future. Eliot's compound ghost and Akhmatova's Guest from the Future promise that "all shall be well" if one is to embrace one's accountability for one's own destiny.

The value of remembering the past is explored in Chapter seven "The Use of Memory". Throughout their verses, Akhmatova and Eliot affirm memory as the principal means to learn from history and so break its chains. In addressing various aspects of memory, the poems emphasise the protagonism of what Ricoeur calls "collective memory". Eliot and Akhmatova insist on the prevailing role of memory enhanced with imagination as opposed to memory that only repeats past experiences.

Remembering allows an escape from linear time and access to eternity, which is a true being superior to the human. "Truth and Eternity" discusses the way in

which the poets perceive this superior world and whether they consider it to be within the grasp of the individual. Eliot and Akhmatova gauge the eternal and the limitations of the human: humans are often blinded by their ignorance and the temporality of their existence. Through the constant interaction between the two, the poets seek to perceive the eternal, which for them is found even in daily routines.

Eliot's and Akhmatova's goal when attempting to tame time is to attain freedom from the chains of time. While Eliot states "only through time the time is conquered", Akhmatova, who writes her verse under Stalin's dictatorship, does not dare to call freedom by its name. Nonetheless, as the reading of the two poems alongside Berdyaev's theories proves, both the *Poem* and *Quartets* seek freedom with equal determination.

Lastly, chapter ten "At the Still Point" observes what is to be discovered if once the spiritual journey paved by the poems for their readers is fulfilled. The same as freedom, the point of intersection of the temporal and the eternal is considerably more present in the *Quartets* than in the *Poem*. Eliot largely follows the mystics' understanding of "the still point".

Read together, *Poem Without a Hero* and *Four Quartet*s interact allowing for the encounter between Eliot and Akhmatova, which never took place in reality and thus, belongs to the dimension of "what might have been". As the two poets demonstrate in their verses, this potential past should not be underestimated, and the dialogue between their texts proves it. Meditating on time and its significance, Eliot and Akhmatova depict it as both always present in one's life and superior to the human world. As a link between the two realities, the eternal and the human,

time proves to be the means to the self's liberation. History, memory, and self-surrender become essential in this quest to conquer time. The freedom that they aspire to is such that it is capable of breaking the chains of time thus allowing one to reach for the wisdom of the eternal.

Chapter 1

Same Era, Different Worlds

Other echoes
Inhabit the garden. Shall we follow?
T.S. Eliot, *Four Quartets*

I sleep –
I dream of our youth
A. Akhmatova, *Poem Without a Hero*

Thomas Stearns Eliot and Anna Akhmatova were contemporaries, and the temporal parallels of their lives have become related to my assertion of a link between the authors. Akhmatova was born in 1889, Eliot a year later, and both died aged 76. Such numerical resemblance might be an example of "the irony of fate", for it is one of very few similarities in the poets' biographies.

Differences in Eliot's and Akhmatova's lives arise first from the places where they were born and are highlighted by their specific cultural backgrounds; the contrast was exacerbated by the October Revolution in Russia in 1917, the Stalin-Hitler pact of 1939, and World War II, 1939-1945. For the people of Russia, then part of the Soviet Union, World War II started later, in June 1941, when the Nazis crossed the Soviet border, and the years from 1941 to 1945 are referred to by the Russians as the Great Patriotic War. Although the Soviet Union and Western countries ended the war fighting side by side against Nazism, the outcome was democracy in the West and a series of totalitarian regimes in the Eastern Europe.

* * *

Anna Akhmatova was born in Odesa and spent all her life in Russia, which became the Soviet Union when she was thirty years old. Later, in her memoirs, she would write: "I was born the same year as Charlie Chaplin, Tolstoy's "The Kreutzer Sonata", the Eiffel Tower, and it seems, Eliot" (Polivanov, 6). She spent her childhood and youth in one country, Tsarist Russia, and from her adolescence to her old age in an absolutely different country, even though the land and the language were the same. As one of Akhmatova's disciples, Anatoly Nayman points out, "Her life seems longer than the life of any other woman who was born and died at the same time, because, of course, it was so eventful; because it did not simply include several historical epochs – it also expressed them" (*Remembering Anna Akhmatova,* 202).

The date of Akhmatova's birth, June 23, 1889, on St. John's Eve, was celebrated in Pre-Revolutionary Russia as the time of the year when all nature's forces were most present. She was born as Anna Andreyevna Gorenko but was convinced that a poet must be able "to think up a decent pseudonym" (Nayman *Remembering Anna Akhmatova*, 13). She started signing her poems as "Anna Akhmatova" in 1911 and officially changed her surname to Akhmatova in 1918. Apart from the call of poetic duty, Anna Gorenko's decision was also provoked by her father's unwillingness to accept his daughter's talent: he did not want his family name to be sullied by association with the young poet. Akhmatova was the maiden name of her great-great-grandmother, a descendant of an ancient and noble Tatar family. Akhmatova believed that her ancestor was Khan Ahmat, "the last Tatar to

accept tribute from the Russian rulers" (Reeder *Anna Akhmatova: Poet and Prophet*, 4).

The Gorenko family was not a very happy one, due to the disharmony between Akhmatova's parents. They belonged to the nobility, and both had been married before; Andrey Gorenko (1848-1915), Anna's father, was a naval engineer who had two sons from his previous marriage. Inna Stogova (1852-1930), her mother, was an intelligent but impractical woman, whose role was to take care of the whole family. Akhmatova used to describe her mother as a woman of "useless kindness". As disapproving as such a description sounds, the poet inherited this characteristic, which was remembered by many of her friends, such as Lydia Chukovskaya (1907-1996), Faina Ranevskaya (1896-1984), and Anatoly Nayman (b.1936). In his conclusion to *Ob Anna Akhmatovoi,* an edition of poems, letters, and articles dedicated to the poet, Mikhail Kralin notes that this kindness and generosity were particularly evident at the end of her life. Despite poor health and constant emotional strain, caused by the uneasiness of her relationship with her son, Akhmatova would still see visitors every day, and would always find something reassuring to tell them (558). As draining as that might have been, she also found time and strength to keep developing her talent until the very last day.

There were six children in the Gorenko family: Andrey and Inna, who were older than Anna; Iya, Irina, and Victor, the youngest. Two of her sisters died of tuberculosis. Akhmatova once told Chukovskaya: "I would have died too, of course, but I was saved by my thyroid disorder – which destroys tuberculosis" (*The Akhmatova Journals,* 119). She also lost one of her brothers quite early. In 1921,

Andrey, her elder brother, and his wife attempted to kill themselves after losing their son to malaria (Feinstein *Anna of All the Russias,* 89-90). Fortunately, when rescuers entered the flat, Andrey's wife was still breathing. She turned out to be pregnant and gave birth to a perfectly healthy child.

Surprisingly, there were no books in Akhmatova's house, but as soon as she gained access to poetry at school, she was absorbed by its beauty, and by the age of thirteen already knew Baudelaire and Voltaire. According to Nayman, she began reading Shakespeare in her youth, starting with *Macbeth* (95), whose heroine is one of the most powerful female characters in literature. Yet Akhmatova saw nothing special in her passion for lyrical art from a very young age, for she believed that poetry was loved in Russia, much more so than in other countries.

* * *

Thomas Stearns Eliot was born in St. Louis, Missouri, USA and eventually settled in England. His father owned a brick factory, and his mother, who also wrote poetry, was active with social work. Eliot had four older sisters and one brother. According to Stephen Spender, a close friend of the poet, the Eliot family was "literate, cultivated, institutional, but their attitude can hardly be described as aesthetic" (*Eliot,* 24). There is a parallel with Akhmatova's family, who were also educated and well-read but did not perceive literature as one of the primary values; like Akhmatova, Eliot became fascinated with reading as soon as he learned the skill.

Another unifying factor in the poets' biographies is that both were born by a river. In 1930, Eliot wrote in one of his letters to Marquis W. Childs:

> It is self-evident that St. Louis affected me more deeply than any other environment has ever done. I feel that there is something in having passed one's childhood beside the big river, which is incommunicable to those people who have not. I consider myself fortunate to have been born here, rather than in Boston, or New York, or London.[1]

This appreciation of his earliest experiences stayed with him throughout his life. Anna Akhmatova shared his deep respect for rivers, as Nayman mentions, "her inner connectedness with the element of water is equally a fact of her biography" (*Remembering Anna Akhmatova,* 50).

* * *

Akhmatova was married three times. Her first husband, Nikolai Gumilev (1886-1921), was also a talented poet. Gumilev met young Akhmatova as early as 1903. Reeder highlights that despite many shared views, for instance, their interest in the French symbolists, the two poets diverged on one point, namely, Gumilev's interest in Nietzsche, whose ideas were popular at that time, and Akhmatova's rejection of them (*Anna Akhmatova: Poet and Prophet,* 12). Apart from literature and philosophy, Gumilev was interested in exploring other cultures and by the time of their marriage, had travelled to France, Turkey, and Egypt.

The marriage to Gumilev was probably the most significant in Akhmatova's life, despite all its difficulties. It remains a mystery why she accepted Gumilev's

[1] T.S. Eliot's letters are quoted from http://tseliot.com unless otherwise is specified.

proposal. He had proposed several times, and after some of her refusal, he even intended suicide. However, in 1909 she agreed to become Gumilev's wife, though none of their friends or acquaintances had ever noticed any sign of deep affection on her part. Besides, as many observed, the newly-weds were equally independent and creative, which would eventually lead to their separation. Before that, in 1911, together with Osip Mandelstam (1891-1938) and Gumilev, Akhmatova founded a movement called Acmeism.[2]

Akhmatova and Gumilev were divorced in 1918. The decision was anticipated as both had had several affairs and by the end of their marriage rarely saw each other. Even at those difficult times for their relationship, Akhmatova demonstrated that she would not allow personal feelings to cloud her judgement. Though hurt by Gumilev's multiple affairs, she never ceased to praise his poetic talent. Elaine Feinstein observed that when Akhmatova heard of Zinaida Gippius's and Dmitry Merezhkovsky's[3] dismissive attitude towards Gumilev, she concluded for herself that she would never appear in Gippius's and Merezhkovsky's circle, and was faithful to this decision throughout her life (*Anna of All the Russias,* 43).

A few months later in the same year, after the official separation, Akhmatova married again, to a scholar and poet, Vladimir Shileiko (1891-1930). In fact, it was his name that she had provided to Gumilev as the reason for the divorce. Her choice was quite surprising as Shileiko, although belonging to the same circle as she and

[2] Acmeism is further discussed in Chapter 2.

[3] Zinaida Gippius (1869-1945) and Dmitry Merezhkovsky (1865-1941) were two of the most influential cultural figures in Modernist Russia and thus had a lot of power over the circles to which Akhmatova and Gumilev belonged.

Gumilev, did not seem to have any interests except his research area, namely ancient, especially Babylonian civilisation. Her own explanation was rather mysterious: "I felt so filthy, I thought it would be like a cleansing, like going to a convent, knowing you are going to lose your freedom" (Reeder *Anna Akhmatova: Poet and Prophet,* 119). Thanks to Shileiko, Akhmatova found shelter under the roof of the Fontanka House, the place that she would call home for many years; she also made it the setting of *Poem Without a Hero*.

The union with Shileiko was not to last either. Both he and Akhmatova were impractical, which became particularly obvious and bothering in the times of Revolution. What is more, in 1921, her first husband and the father of her son, Nikolai Gumilev, was arrested, accused of participating in an anti-Bolshevik conspiracy, and shot by the Bolsheviks. Like so many others, Akhmatova had an opportunity to leave her country, but it was not an option for her, as she felt deeply that she belonged to Russia. She believed that those who fled from Russia after the Revolution "left their country for enemies to tear apart" (Nayman, 107).

Remaining in Russia and living with Shileiko, Akhmatova repeatedly mentioned his tyrannical character; he would expect her to do all the housework, queue for their food rations, but most importantly, he would burn her poems. Amanda Haight claims that the reason behind such treatment is that Shileiko wanted a wife, not a poet (*Anna Akhmatova: A Poetic Pilgrimage,* 55). They lived together for three years, from 1918 to 1921.

In 1925, Akhmatova moved in with Nikolai Punin (1888-1953), an art historian she had started seeing several years before (Reeder *Anna Akhmatova: Poet*

and Prophet, 181). In December of the same year, Shileiko asked for a divorce in order to re-marry and met no objection from Akhmatova. She proved her kindness again as she would care for him for a long time after they had parted, and so in turn would Shileiko.

Akhmatova's last marriage, to Punin, was not officially registered because he was already married and did not intend to divorce. However, it was her most long-lived relationship, as they stayed together from 1922 till 1938. The circumstances of this union are unusual: Akhmatova was to live with Punin, his wife and daughter. The uncomfortable atmosphere at Punin's home was not her major concern as the Soviet regime opened a battle against "undesirable" thinking.

Akhmatova's fight with censorship started at the same time as the Bolshevik regime in Russia, in October 1917. By that time, she had become an acknowledged poet. Acmeism had proven its place in the history of Russian poetry, and Akhmatova was arguably the brightest talent of that poetic group. Despite her marriage to a co-founder of Acmeism, she had never been perceived as her husband's companion in his search for pure poetry, rather she was seen as an independent and utterly gifted poet herself. The achievement was even more significant considering that Akhmatova was one of the first female writers whose poetry was appreciated as much as that of her male colleagues.

The success of Akhmatova's work is partly explained by the specific voice of her poetry noticeable even then, before the Revolution of 1917, when her life was filled with artistic evenings in famous modernist locations of Saint-Petersburg, such

as "Stray Dog" and "Tower"[4], as well as love affairs, chats with friends, and trips to Europe. It would be wrong to say that Akhmatova led a superficial lifestyle, but in comparison with what was to come, until 1917, her life was relatively carefree. Her first collections of poems, *Evening* (1912) and *Rosary* (1914), were mostly centred on love, death, and eternity.

These themes may seem typical for a female writer, whose concerns, according to a stereotypical way of thinking about women authors, would stay within the joys and dramas of love affairs. However, Akhmatova differed in how she treated those topics. Writing about quite personal experiences, she created poems that talked to all people, not only women or members of her circle.

The secret of her craft was in turning a subjective emotion into what T.S. Eliot would call "an objective correlative", as described in the 1919 essay "Hamlet and His Problems" (*The Sacred Wood*, 100). Russian researcher, Roman Timenchik, refers to this peculiarity of Akhmatova's poems as "heightened suggestiveness", meaning "the effect of transmitting fundamental meanings beyond and above the lexical level of a poem"[5] ("Poetica rannei Akhmatovoi: 'povishennaia suggestivnost'", 157). I illustrate this aspect using one of her most

[4] "Stray Dog" was a well-known Saint-Petersburg café that became a meeting point for Russian Modernists in 1911-1915. "Tower" was a nickname for another haunt of writers and thinkers of Modernism, an apartment belonging to Viacheslav Ivanov.

[5] My translation from Russian.

known poems, which appeared in her first collection of poems, *Evening*[6], published as early as 1912:

> Under her dark veil she wrung her hands...
> "Why are you so pale today?"
> "Because I made him drink of stinging grief
> Until he got drunk on it.
> How can I forget? He staggered out,
> His mouth twisted in agony...
> I ran down not touching the bannister
> And caught up with him at the gate.
> Panting, I cried: 'A joke!
> That's all it was. If you leave, I'll die.'
> He smiled calmly and grimly
> And told me: "Don't stand there in the wind"[7] (85)

The verse gained immense popularity in Russia, as *Evening* did too, and turned the author into an icon of her time. Apart from its recognition, the poem is

[6] All quotations of Anna Akhmatova are introduced in Russian and English. Their original, Russian version is quoted from Akhmatova, A., *Sochineniya v Dvux Tomah*, Tom Perviy, Moscow: Pravda, 1990; the translated poems are quoted from Akhmatova, A. *The Complete Poems*. Trans. by J. Hemschemeyer. Boston: Zephyr Press, and Edinburgh: Canongate, 2014, unless otherwise is specified.

[7] In Russian: Сжала руки под тёмной вуалью...
"Отчего ты сегодня бледна?"
− Оттого, что я терпкой печалью
Напоила его допьяна.
Как забуду? Он вышел, шатаясь,
Искривился мучительно рот...
Я сбежала, перил не касаясь,
Я бежала за ним до ворот.
Задыхаясь, я крикнула: "Шутка
Всё, что было. Уйдешь, я умру."
Улыбнулся спокойно и жутко
И сказал мне: "Не стой на ветру"(28)

interesting in relation to Akhmatova's technique, which she would perfect until the end of her days. Although the rhythm of the poem is traditional to a Russian ear, the images are striking. The first line particularly stands out as the quintessence of the despair that fills the whole text, in which the protagonist tells us the story of her misery. The poem finishes with what would seem a sign of care in another context but here strikes with its coldness.

The inappropriateness of "his" last words is such that it provokes the opposite effect from the lexical meaning of the phrase and sounds utterly indifferent. As one can see, the dramatism of the poem almost never expressed directly, except for the line "If you leave, I'll die". However, this line is still less tragic than a Russian reader would expect, because conventionally such an emotional phrase needs an exclamation mark; Akhmatova ends it with a subtle full stop as if refusing to exaggerate even at this culminating point.

As early as in her first collection of poems, Akhmatova transformed the timely moments of her personal existence into the timeless outline of the universal experience. It is also evident in the quoted poem, in which the protagonists' images are truly abstract. There is nothing definite about them except their gender. What is peculiar about the characters of the poems is that they express their emotions via their physical traits and gestures and to a much lesser degree by words. This method allows her to keep the poetic "him" and "her" impersonal while fully alive and human.

Thus, a very short verbal exchange filled with a wide range of emotions (despair, regret, breakdown, grief, indifference on the edge of violence) welcomes

every reader to the space of the poem. The poetic persona's own pain transforms into the universal pain of abandonment and devastation. Furthermore, although the context of the whole book of *Evening* alongside Akhmatova's biography indicates that the characters must have been lovers, taken on its own the poem embraces the figures of a wife and a husband, a daughter and a father, two friends as possible protagonists thus expanding the topic of romantic love to a wider understanding of love.

Another striking feature that stayed with the poet throughout her artistic career was clarity, which was essential for Acmeists and remained so for Akhmatova. What initially made her poems different from others being written at the time was precisely this clarity of images and language, and quite a laconic manner of speaking, which appeared relevant to her readers and which made her poems accessible to any literate person. This point is exemplified in the poem too, in which the dramatism is expressed via gestures and facial expressions rather than lexemes, and the images are as abstract as full of life thanks to the very careful choice of words. Take for instance the poetic persona's running down without "touching the bannister", and because of this little detail a reader pictures an impulsive protagonist, impetuous, almost reckless in her desire to keep her companion from leaving. This style gave Akhmatova's poems a sharp and memorable sound. For instance, the opening line "Under her dark veil she wrung her hands..." is one of the most recognisable in Russian literature.

* * *

After finishing school studies, T.S. Eliot studied for a degree in philosophy at Harvard University, which he accomplished in three years instead of the usual four. In 1910, he went to Paris to study philosophy at the Sorbonne University. Akhmatova visited the French capital the same year as Eliot, but it is highly unlikely that they would have known of each other. By 1911, Eliot had returned to Harvard in order to study Indian philosophy and Sanskrit, which he completed by 1914 when he moved to Europe, first to Germany and afterwards to England. In England, Eliot, in Richard Aldington's (1892-1962) opinion, "succeeded in doing what no other American had ever done – imposing his personality, taste, and even many of his opinions on literary England" (*Life for Life's Sake*, 217).

In 1915, Eliot studied at Oxford, where Akhmatova would arrive fifty years later. He hoped to meet Francis Herbert Bradley (1846–1924), an acknowledged British philosopher and prominent thinker of British Idealism, who was teaching there at the time. Unfortunately, the professor was almost unavailable (Gordon *The Imperfect Life of T.S.Eliot*, 92).

The same year Eliot married Vivienne Haigh-Wood (1888-1947), who was described by their friends at the time as charmingly vivid and genuine. In her biography of Eliot, Lyndall Gordon points out that Vivienne and Ezra Pound were the "two compelling individuals" who "made claims" on the young poet (*The Imperfect Life of T.S. Eliot*, 93). The newly-wed Eliot continued his studies and kept working on his doctoral dissertation in Europe on the concepts of knowledge and experience in Bradley's philosophy. World War I interfered in Eliot's plans, and he

could not go to the US to defend his dissertation at Harvard, although he had finished and submitted his thesis by 1916. He was also called to join the American army, but due to his hernia condition and delay in paperwork, he remained a civilian.

Meanwhile, his marriage could not be considered a happy one, mainly due to Vivienne's infidelity and numerous health issues. Eliot and his wife gradually became estranged from each other and formally separated in 1933 yet never divorced. The contest of this marriage and following separation proved central to Eliot, both as a person and as a poet (Gordon, 237).

In 1915, one year after he had led Vivienne to the altar, one of his most known poems, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" was published, thanks to Ezra Pound (1885-1972), whom he had met as soon as he arrived in England. Being a frequent visitor to Pound's flat in London, Eliot had the chance to meet the artistic elite of the time, and soon enough he became acquainted with Aldous Huxley (1894-1963), Douglas Goldring (1887-1960), Wyndham Lewis (1882-1957) as well as the members of the Bloomsbury circle, such as Katherine Mansfield (1888-1923), Clive Bell (1881-1964), and Leonard (1880-1969) and Virginia Woolf (1882-1941). Eliot's new acquaintances were impressed not only by his original views and distinguished poetic gift but also by his exotic good looks, to quote Goldring (Bergonzi *T.S. Eliot*, 31). It was also Pound who suggested various corrections to another of Eliot's work that was to become the most influential poem of the twentieth century, *The Waste Land*.

Interestingly, Eliot and Akhmatova both conceived poetry as a dark and mysterious devotion. While Bergonzi points out that Eliot "regarded poetic creation as a possibly dangerous and sacrificial surrender to unknown forces" (*T.S. Eliot,* 72), Nayman remembers Akhmatova mentioning that *Poem Without a Hero* simply "came to her", as if "she was 'possessed by demonic black thirst'" (*Remembering Anna Akhmatova,*41).

Whatever the source of Eliot's talent, it put him in the vanguard of Modernism. From the publication of "Prufrock" (1915) and *The Waste Land* (1922), as well as a collection of critical essays *The Sacred Wood* (1920), Eliot rose as a dominant figure not only of the English artistic elite but also of the entire English-speaking world.

* * *

In Russia, everything changed drastically in 1917. In February, the Tsarist government in Russia fell, followed by a sanguinary revolution in October of the same year. The overthrow brought innumerable changes in Akhmatova's life. To begin with, she became homeless on the eve of the February Revolution and remained so until almost the end of her life, when the Soviet government granted her a country house outside Leningrad in 1955, where she was to live for eleven more years. The Revolution also meant starvation, misery, shortage of such essentials as fuel, and many of Akhmatova's friends, noticing that she was on the verge of starvation, tried to help her.

Having nowhere to live or nothing to eat did not seem to affect Akhmatova, but the death of Nikolai Gumilev marked her for the rest of her life. It is still unclear how exactly the execution took place, but it is confirmed that it was conducted in August of 1921[8]. Gumilev had been arrested a few days before and accused of anti-Bolshevik conspiracy. He had never pretended that he liked the Bolshevik regime or that he had any respect for the Bolsheviks. However, it was doubtful that he would have participated in a plot against the effective power. It is more likely that Gumilev became another victim of the political terror for which the Bolshevik government would become so infamous. Throughout her life, Akhmatova would commemorate in her work the poet who was murdered so young, including in *Poem Without a Hero*. However, the authorities did not stop their reprisals, for Gumilev's and Akhmatova's son, Lev (1912-1992), would have to face tireless persecution and spend much of his life in labour camps since he was a son of the disgraced father.

In the period between 1917 and 1922, before the Iron Curtain separated the USSR from the West, Akhmatova still had a chance to leave the country and go into exile, as so many of her contemporaries and friends had chosen to do. Nonetheless, abandoning her native land was not an option for the poet. In his memoir, Sir Isaiah Berlin mentions that Akhmatova's deep patriotism was not tinged by nationalism. The thought of emigration was simply hateful to Akhmatova, who believed this would have been a betrayal on her part (*The Complete Poems*,

[8] As former lawyer Grigoriy Terekhov demonstrated in his research (1987), Gumilev's case was fabricated by Cheka (Soviet Secret Police), and his execution indeed took place in August 1921.

43). She felt it was her duty to stay in her country, with her people. From the moment of this decision, she would be persecuted by Soviet censorship; the surname and methods of the agents would vary but the purpose would stay the same – Anna Akhmatova's name had to be forgotten by the Soviet people.

The first direct encounter with this generic Soviet censor happened in 1925. Haight recalls Akhmatova's conviction that that year, an unofficial resolution of the Communist Party banned any further publication of her work (*Anna Akhmatova: A Poetic Pilgrimage,* 80). The ban was not announced, but her poetry would be left unpublished for the next decade and a half.

Due to spying on her, conducted by the KGB agents alongside her acquaintances, Akhmatova started developing an astute way of writing poems, called *tainopis*, which means "secret writing". The method consisted in that many of her poems would not be written down by herself; instead, she would memorise them and tell them to the friends she could trust, who would learn the poems by heart too. Some of the trustees would eventually write them down.

Reading the diaries of Lydia Chukovskaya, a writer herself and Akhmatova's close friend, one notices what hard labour it was. Akhmatova would ask Chukovskaya about poems written decades before in order to modify them, and sometimes Akhmatova needed to remember not only a poem but also the changes that she made to it throughout time. The method of tainopis is reminiscent of ancient poetry and the way in which Homer's work has been transmitted during centuries in pre-history, the difference being that Akhmatova was employing the method at knifepoint and in modern times.

Nonetheless, not publishing Akhmatova's work was not enough to erase her name from the history of Russia. In the words of Andy McSmith, the author of the recent research into the relationship between talent and dictatorship: "A Russian who had absorbed Akhmatova's poetry or Shostakovich's music could not be turned into a robot, even by Stalin's terrifyingly efficient machinery of repression" (*Fear and the Muse Kept the Watch*, 10). Akhmatova attained fame and reference before the Communist regime came into power and remained a well-known figure thereafter. Chukovskaya, Haight, Anderson, and Nayman mention occasional visitors who did not belong to the literary world but were seeking an audience with Akhmatova, believing that she could give them answers they did not have themselves. Naturally, there were quite a few aspiring poets who were seeking approval from the great poet.

In light of this attention, Akhmatova was deemed as potentially dangerous by the Communists who were fighting fiercely against writers and poets, as the latter, in the absence of political parties, could become leaders of opinion. The question remains how Akhmatova survived the terror; perhaps, we will never know the real reason. The Soviet authorities were as violent as they were capricious, and the whole system was opaque and highly secretive. Survival, though, was not a blessing either. As Chukovskaya puts it, "all of us have spent all of our lives standing at the very edge. Akhmatova accidentally did not perish, but she has always – through her "unperishing" – discerned sounds and contours of that other, inevitable and miraculously evaded, destiny" (*The Akhmatova Journals*, 356).

Apart from constant fear for her own life, Akhmatova had to fear for her only child. Many of her friends, such as Osip Mandelstam, vanished into the hands of the Communists, and this always affected her profoundly. Nevertheless, nothing could have struck her more than the arrest of her son, Lev Gumilev, in 1938. Lev had been arrested several times in the 1920s and released very shortly after, but this time he was sentenced to five years of work in labour camps. He fulfilled his punishment and volunteered to go to the front in World War II. His willingness to risk his life for the Soviet State appears to have granted him a few years of freedom, for the next arrest would not happen until 1949, four years after the end of the war (Feinstein *Anna of All the Russias*, 227).

Caryl Emerson notes that World War II due to its apparent moral simplicity (e.g. the Nazis are bad, fighting against them is good) clarified and unified public poetry to a certain degree (*The Cambridge Introduction to Russian Literature*, 217). The most exquisite poem, or better, poetic cycle of the Stalin years, however, could not be made public: Anna Akhmatova's *Requiem*, provoked by her son's arrest, was written between 1935 and 1943 but could not be published in its entirety in Russia until 1987 (217). The main reason for the key role of the poem in Soviet and, more generally, Russian poetry is announced in her Foreword to the poem:

> In the terrible years of the Yezhov terror, I spent seventeen months in the prison lines of Leningrad. Once, someone "recognized" me. Then a woman with bluish lips standing behind me, who, of course, had never heard me called by name before, woke up from the stupor to which everyone had succumbed and whispered in my ear (everyone spoke in whispers there):
>
> "Can you describe this?'
>
> And I answered: "Yes, I can."

> Then something that looked like a smile passed over what had once been her face.[9] (384)

Here Akhmatova takes it upon herself to bear witness to the repression of the totalitarian regime. She will give voice to those who would otherwise remain unheard, her fellow-countrymen, mothers in the prison queues whose sons were falsely accused, for instance, for simply being born with the wrong name, Gumilev being just one example. Akhmatova was to realise, and she would express this sentiment in *Poem Without a Hero*, that, despite the tragedy, it is a privilege to be present at the Crucifixion, since only a few people would have the honour of witnessing history in one of its most dramatic, earth-shattering moments. In Akhmatova's case, it was also her mission to give voice to her time, express what was hidden and unseen behind the official propaganda of the regime of Stalin and his successors. So she created one of the most emblematic works of twentieth-century Russian poetry.

During the war, Akhmatova's name was to be pronounced and appear in print occasionally, for propagandistic reasons. World War II caused some changes in the mind of the Soviet governors and citizens, for instance, it broadened the concept of

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[9] In Russian: В страшные годы ежовщины я провела семнадцать месяцев в тюремных очередях в Ленинграде. Как-то раз кто-то "опознал" меня. Тогда стоящая за мной женщина, которая, конечно, никогда не слыхала моего имени, очнулась от свойственного нам всем оцепенения и спросила меня на ухо (там все говорили шепотом):

– А это вы можете описать?

И я сказала: – Могу.

Тогда что-то вроде улыбки скользнуло по тому, что некогда было ее лицом.

(196)

being a "patriot" to anyone who was against the Nazi regime. Akhmatova certainly fitted such a definition, and the strength of her talent was useful for the Red Army. As a result, not only did her poems start to be published again, but she was even allowed to read some of them on the radio. It seemed that the Soviet State decided to tolerate Akhmatova.

At the end of the war, in 1945, she was visited by a British diplomat, Sir Isaiah Berlin (1909-1997), with whom she talked all night.[10] In the eyes of the Soviet authorities, a meeting of a Soviet subject with a foreigner was immediately seen as a conspiracy with subversive capitalist forces meant to topple the communist order. Together with the fact that Sir Isaiah was a foreigner well-acquainted with the political elite of the West, it was also of importance that his meeting with Akhmatova was interrupted by Winston Churchill's (1874-1965) son. Randolph Churchill (1911-1968) had heard from their common acquaintances that his friend Berlin was in Leningrad and decided to see him immediately, but as he only knew the building number and not the flat, he started shouting his friend's name so as to draw his attention. After a few moments, Berlin heard Randolph Churchill's voice and, having said goodbye to Akhmatova, joined him almost straight away. The whole incident was entirely innocent and did not carry any political implication. However, in the Soviet state, encounters with foreigners were considered suspicious and almost always punished by the article 58 of the USSR Penal Code. Akhmatova's voice was taken away again.

[10] More on the encounter between Akhmatova and Berlin is found in Chapter 3.

In 1946, a new round of Soviet censorship against the Russian poet began. The party proclaimed that Mikhail Zoshchenko (1894-1958), a satirical writer, and Anna Akhmatova were promoting wrong ideas. Andrei Zhdanov (1896-1948), the Head of Propaganda and Agitation Department, thus, the leader of Soviet propaganda after World War II and one of the key figures in the Stalinist terror, accused Akhmatova, in particular, of being, "a typical exponent of empty, frivolous poetry that is alien to our people" ("*About the Journals 'Zvezda' and 'Leningrad'")*. The main reason for such a claim was that it was "permeated by the scent of pessimism and decay, redolent of old-fashioned salon poetry, frozen in the positions of bourgeois-aristocratic aestheticism and decadence – "art for art's sake" – not wanting to progress forward with our people, her verses cause damage to the upbringing of our youth and cannot be tolerated in Soviet literature" ("*About the Journals 'Zvezda' and 'Leningrad'"*).

Both Zoshchenko and Akhmatova were expelled from the Union of the Soviet Writers, which at the time was the only way for a writer to obtain work in the Soviet Union and thus survive. The resolution not only targeted the two authors but anyone who dared think differently from what the party believed. It also marked "the onset of a new repressive Party line in the arts" (Emerson *The Cambridge Introduction to Russian Literature,* 192). Akhmatova and Zoshchenko, in Chukovskaya's view, may have been singled out to bear the brunt because of their great popularity (*The Akhmatova Journals,* 145).

However, at this point, it was almost impossible to wipe out Akhmatova's name from people's memory, for during World War II the Party had admitted that

she was a patriot. Thus, the Communist Party and its censors resorted to the help of various strategies, starting with false rumours and, when this proved useless, running scams, distorting Akhmatova's poems (for instance, they attributed someone else's lines and entire poems to her). She was often labelled in Soviet newspapers as "half-nun, half-whore", thanks to Andrey Zhdanov. The irony is that this appalling phrasing was derived from one of the most acclaimed critical articles on Akhmatova's writing that belonged to D.S. Mirsky (1890-1939) and was published in 1925.

As suffocating as the atmosphere of public harassment appeared for Akhmatova, it was pushed to the sidelines by the arrest of her son in 1949 followed by the detention of Nikolai Punin, whom Akhmatova considered her husband and with whom she lived for almost thirty years. She was convinced that Stalin longed to take vengeance on her for the encounter with the diplomat Sir Isaiah Berlin four years before. When they met again in Oxford, in 1965, Akhmatova, talking to Berlin, would link the start of the Cold War with the same episode of her biography, which he found far-fetched (Akhmatova *The Complete Poems*, 48).

If the Cold War was beyond Akhmatova's limits of control, her son's destiny was one matter that she hoped to influence. She feared that unlike the previous times, when Lev Gumilev was arrested but let go soon afterwards, this time the Communist State was determined to exterminate Lev, and the only way to save him was to bow her head to Stalin, something that she had never done before, neither for herself nor anyone else. Thus, in 1950, she wrote a cycle of poems called "In

the Praise of Peace", an openly propagandist work lauding Stalin. Here are the final lines of the first poem of the cycle:

> And the Leader hears the voice
> Of the grateful nation:
> "We are here
> To declare –
> where Stalin is, there freedom is,
> The grandeur of the earth, and peace!" (879)

Contemporary Russian criticism attacked Akhmatova for this act of self-humiliation, and some of the critics even referred to it as a pointless sacrifice. Yet can one accuse a mother who is being blackmailed for saving her son's life? Lev Gumilev most probably survived thanks to his mother's poem which she wrote against her will, and thanks to which he was released six years later, in 1956. Akhmatova regretted writing the pro-Stalinist verses and would always glue together the pages of her books which contained the poems so that it would be impossible to read them. The only reason she would go so far was to sacrifice herself for her son.

Apart from those instances of the evident fight with the regime, there was also a day-to-day battle against KGB surveillance. Haight mentions in her book that Akhmatova had to appear at her window at least twice a day so that the guard who stood in the street outside could see that she had not escaped or committed suicide (*Anna Akhmatova: A Poetic Pilgrimage,* 146). She would also put hairs between pages of her notebooks in certain positions to see if someone else had gone through her writings without her permission. Almost every day, she would find the hairs lying differently from the way they were put initially. The constant surveillance did

not end there; it was conducted not only by KGB agents but also by friends, some of whom were informers, although many against their will. If the recent recruitment by the Secret Police was quite apparent in the case of some frequent visitors, there were others who spied on her but whom she never suspected and thus trusted them till the end of her life.

In 1953, Joseph Stalin died. His successor, Nikita Khrushchev (1894-1971), exposed Stalin as a cruel tyrant. As Reeder puts it in "Anna Akhmatova: the Stalin Years", while the new regime did not "fulfill all the hopes of the intelligentsia or the people at large, it did at least mean that the harshest aspects of the reign of Terror were ended" (123). These were "the vegetarian years", as Akhmatova referred to them. The regime softened a bit, any dissidence was still persecuted but instead of being shot, those who opposed the authorities were sent to labour camps.

For Akhmatova, the change of the head of the party meant, firstly, the return of her son from prisons and camps, and secondly, the return of her poems to a wide audience. She was even granted permission to travel to Rome and Oxford to be honoured with various awards. She was allowed to go to the West, which she did despite her heart condition, in 1964 and 1965, almost fifty years after her previous visit to Europe. There, she was warmly welcomed and received an honorary doctorate from the University of Oxford. She perceived the big celebrations in her name as quite ironic. Chukovskaya remembers how Akhmatova described her visit to Rome in 1965: "And there, can you see, there is a bust. It is the bust of Neron, he is half-turned, he has turned away. He is saying: 'Akhmatova? Haven't heard of her, don't know of her. The one I've heard of is Sappho'" (425). Ironically, the next

year, at the Oxford Sheldonian Theatre, Akhmatova would hear her poetry compared to that of the Greek poet, Sappho.

* * *

Eliot was also acknowledged as an outstanding poet and critic during his lifetime and was awarded a Nobel Prize in 1948. At the beginning of his career, Eliot made a living as a school teacher, a lecturer at evening courses, and a bank clerk. In 1925, he joined the publishing house Faber and Faber, of which he became a director in only a few short years. Performing director's duties, Eliot brought the public's attention to a number of young poets, such as Djuna Barnes (1892-1982), William Empson (1906-1894), Robert Lowell (1917-1977), Ted Hughes (1930-1998), and Wystan Hugh Auden (1907-1973).

An important date in T.S. Eliot's life was June 29, 1927, when he converted to Anglicanism. Two years after joining the church, Eliot wrote to Paul Elmer More:

> What I should like to see is the creation of a new type of intellectual, combining the intellectual and the devotional – a new species, which cannot be created hurriedly. I don't like either the purely intellectual Christian or the purely emotional Christian – both forms of snobbism. The coordination of thought and feeling – without either debauchery or repression – seems to me what is needed (*Selected Letters,* 567).

In the same year, he officially became a British citizen. Eliot's conversion was viewed by many of his contemporaries and friends as an odd decision. For instance, Virginia Woolf, another prominent figure in Anglo-American Modernism, disapproved of it, convinced that belief in God was obscene for a person living in

the times of Modernism. Her letter discussing the issue is striking in its rejection of Eliot's choice:

> I have had a most shameful and distressing interview with dear Tom Eliot, who may be called dead to us all from this day forward. He has become a [believer] in God and immortality, and he goes to church. I was shocked. A corpse would seem more credible than he is. I mean, there's something obscene in a living person sitting by the fire and believing in God
> (February 1928, *Letters*, pp 457-458)

Woolf's sharp criticism is illustrative of what Eliot was to face due to his choice. Many of those who had praised his genius now felt dubious about his mental sanity. Despite his controversial decision, Eliot remained one of the most respected figures in English-speaking Modernism. Besides publishing poems and blazing the trail for young talents, he succeeded as a playwright. His most famous drama in verse, *Murder in the Cathedral*, was published and staged in 1935, and later adapted to TV and the big screen.

Fascism rose to power in the 1930s. Eliot called both Fascism and Communism "the natural idea for the thoughtless person" ("Mr Barnes and Mr Rowse", 683) and made an argument against the two systems as lacking true substance. Gordon affirms that Eliot "discarded popular ideologists of social change... and offered as an alternative the idea of a community knit together by religious discipline" (*The Imperfect Life of T.S. Eliot*, 223). Bergonzi maintains that Eliot's main concern was with the ideal and specifically, his belief in Christianity as the only worthy foundation for society (*T.S. Eliot*, 125). This is the view reflected in Eliot's essay of 1931, "The Idea of A Christian Society", from which it is clear

that the author, although a democrat, was aware of the shortcomings of democracy and therefore, sought the harmony in faith.

The dreams of the ideal Christian society by no means made Eliot numb to the history he was witnessing. He was deeply marked by the outbreak of World War II. In his last editorial for the *Criterion*, he wrote:

> In the present state of public affairs – which has induced in myself a depression of spirits so different from any other experience of fifty years as to be a new emotion – I no longer feel the enthusiasm necessary to make a literary review what it should be. ("Last Words", 274).

In this crucial time, he started working on what would become his masterpiece, *Four Quartets.* In 1936, he published "Burnt Norton", after World War II began, in 1940, "East Coker" was released, which mirrors the structure of the previous quartet, followed in the next few years by the other two parts of the *Quartets*. This is also the time when Eliot was actively involved in the war, serving as a watcher in London.

The war also brought Eliot's poetry to a broader audience. Echoing Akhmatova's destiny at the time, when she was allowed to publish and gained popularity all across the USSR, Eliot and his *Quartets* were widely read and discussed. Perhaps the return to the public eye also contributed to the success of his play, *The Family Reunion*, which was better received in 1946 than in 1939 (Bergonzi *T.S. Eliot*, 154).

Eliot was awarded a Nobel Prize in 1948 "for his outstanding, pioneer contribution to present-day poetry". Robert Giroux (1914-2008), who accompanied

Eliot on his way to Stockholm, recalled an episode that took place in the airport. A reporter asked Eliot for which book he had been awarded the prize, to which he replied: "I believe it's given for the entire corpus". The reporter then inquired, "When did you publish that?". Later Eliot remarked that this could be a good title for a mystery, *The Entire Corpus* (Bergonzi *T.S. Eliot*, 156).

In 1957, Eliot got married for the second time, to Valerie Fletcher (1926-2012). Unlike his first marriage, he knew Valerie quite well, as she had been his secretary since 1949. Aldous Huxley noticed after meeting the newly-wed Eliot that he "is now curiously dull – as a result, perhaps, of being, at last, happy in his second marriage" *(Psychedelic Prophets: The Letters of Aldous Huxley and Humphry Osmond*, 406). Eliot died at the age of 76 in 1965. In accordance with his will, his ashes were taken to a church in East Coker, England. In 1967, he was commemorated in Westminster Abbey.

* * *

Besides being crowned with laurels in Oxford and Rome, Akhmatova also obtained the recognition of the Russian people after Stalin's death, and moreover, she became a witness to the birth of new poetic talents, who considered her their mentor and guide. Joseph Brodsky (1940-1996), a distinguished poet and an ex-Soviet deportee, notes in the introduction to Nayman's book: "To say the least, a whole generation of Russian poets – a generation to which Anatoly Nayman and the author of this introduction belong – lives within her echo, or, better still, is her echo"

(*Remembering Anna Akhmatova,* XI). Anna Akhmatova died in 1966 and was buried at Komarovo Cemetery in Saint Petersburg.

* * *

To recapitulate, the biographies of these two poets seem to be very different. Yet despite the lack of similarity between the circumstances that shaped their lifetime, Akhmatova and Eliot did not live in entirely contrasting realities. Both grew up by and retained an affinity for rivers, and both lived through and experienced the same period of history, though from very different aspects.

Besides purely biographical coincidences, there are also ideas that influenced both poets; for instance, they shared admiration for Dante and Shakespeare, and both were devoted Christians. It should be clarified that "devoted" does not stand for "religious", what it does refer to is that Christian faith was a choice of free will for Akhmatova and for Eliot. Akhmatova was raised Orthodox, but she reached adulthood at the time of unbelief, which was popular in Russia in pre- and post-revolutionary years; at that time, being Orthodox was seen as obsolete. Akhmatova, a poet, free-thinking and independent in her views, remained a true believer throughout her life even in Soviet Russia, although churches were being burnt and any mention of Christianity was forbidden. Eliot, raised in a Unitarian family, whose beliefs were founded on Calvinism, spent his youth in spiritual search. In 1927, almost forty years old, he officially converted to Anglo-Catholicism. As with Akhmatova, his decision was premeditated.

Akhmatova and Eliot did not share the same trajectory of life. While Eliot's ascetic life has given rise to numerous speculations, Akhmatova, apart from marrying three times, led a very passionate life. To research the lives of Eliot and Akhmatova requires different sources. Eliot's biography and character are found in his letters, essays, and friends' memoirs, written later; however, it remains challenging to see what kind of person he was, as apart from his letters, since the sources available to his researchers are not first-hand.

Akhmatova's life is described in the several diaries of those close to her, which provide a more personal approach. She also left her own notebooks, written later in her life. However, her letters are less useful for understanding her personality, as they were self-censored due to political surveillance.

Therefore, the lack of similarity between the two poets' biographies relates not only to the cultures and mentalities they belonged to but also to the historical circumstances they experienced. Even though they were contemporaries and bore witness to two world wars, the geographical distance was too significant to be able to highlight the common points of their lives; it seems that their personal experiences have more differences than similarities.

As contrasting as Russian and American-English backgrounds may be, history made Eliot's and Akhmatova's destinies even more distant. The Russian Revolution and the ensuing Communist dictatorship broke all the connections between Russia and the West. While the West would be concerned with democratic values, individualism, further development of technology and sciences for people's commodity, the Soviet Union was to become a unique totalitarian state, which

lasted for seventy years, had no regard for human life, strove to prove itself as a "superpower" no matter at what cost, and despised capitalism.

In spite of Akhmatova's and Eliot's disparate lives, what is most striking is the resemblance between their literary works and beliefs. Affected by common historical events and sharing the Christian faith, the similarity of their worldview may partly be linked to the aesthetic era in which they both lived, for Modernism was to unify not only the two poets but also the whole of Russia with the West.

Chapter 2

Modernism in Modernity

And whose turn is it to be frightened,
To flinch, to step back, to give in
And ask for forgiveness for an old sin?
A. Akhmatova *Poem Without a Hero*

Old stone to new building, old timber to new fires,
Old fires to ashes, and ashes to the earth
T.S. Eliot *Four Quartets*

2.1 Modernism: Living History

Two World Wars, totalitarian regimes, class and race confrontation alongside scientific discoveries and technological progress irretrievably change the world in the twentieth century. Even more remarkable is the change in the understanding of crucial concepts; such terms as "dehumanisation", "individualism", "unconscious" have redefined our world. It is in these changing circumstances that Modernism comes into existence. The present chapter provides a general overview of Modernism in Anglo-American and Russian contexts so as to create a cultural background for the works of T.S. Eliot and Anna Akhmatova, with a particular focus on those currents that most affected them.

To define Modernism is a complicated task. In "Modernity and Revolution", Perry Anderson describes Modernism as "the emptiest of all cultural categories. Unlike the terms Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque, Mannerist, Romantic, or Neo-Classical, it designates no describable object in its own right: it is completely lacking in positive content" (112-113). Perhaps, the main problem we face when

attempting to define Modernism consists in the diversity of artistic movements that composed modernity.

Such various groups of "-isms" as Symbolism, Futurism, Expressionism, Imagism, Vorticism, Dadaism, and Surrealism are all components of Modernism, and it is difficult to imagine more diverse factions. While Symbolism focused on the mystical, Imagism stood for clarity, but both were closely related to the past. On the other hand, Futurism rejected all previous traditions and focused on what was to come, as well as having a particular interest in technology. Vorticism partially supported Futurism but accused it of romanticising machines, while Futurists intended to discard sentimentality. At the same time, Surrealism was concerned with an entirely different paradigm, the human psyche and the subconscious. The vastness of contradictions between Modernist groups is evident and proves the futility of finding one neat definition of the aesthetic that shaped the first half of the twentieth century. With all the differences among Modernist schools, the only common ground for them is found in the historical framework that they faced. Modernist arts originated in a dialogue with contemporary challenges imposed by the twentieth century. In *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*, Michael Levinson offers a relevant view on Modernism less as a "thing" than "as a set of responses to problems posed by the conditions of modernity" (3).

"The conditions of modernity" were challenging indeed. The changes brought about by the technical revolution were both various and rapid. Scientific discoveries and swift improvements raised new hopes, many of which were swept away by World War I. The self-contradictory twentieth century called into question previous

beliefs, especially those related to ever-altering history and people's place within it. James Longenbach emphasises that Modernism was particularly characterised by an "active interest in history" or a "creative interest in the past" (*Modernist Poetics of History,* 11). Michael Bell goes further by stating that "Modernist writers were almost obsessively concerned with history" (*The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*, 14). Yet the artists of the beginning of the twentieth century were concerned with other concepts as well, for instance, their own times, the meaning of art, and the role of man in the world. However, Bell's phrasing reveals that for Modernists, past and history lay at the core of their worldview.

Before Modernism, history was seen as an objective discipline: its purpose was to describe historical facts and past events. It was conceived as the complete past of humankind, a continuous linear sequence of actions and events. This view has a long tradition, dating back to Ancient Greece and Aristotle's views. In *Poetics,* he discusses the value of history in relation to poetry: "Poetry is... a more philosophical and a higher thing than history for poetry tends to express the universal, history the particular" (17). This well-known quote is the Aristotle's only reference to history and its meaning. In his view poetry is concerned with the "universal", unlike history which goes no further than the "singular".

Thus, Aristotle's philosophy discards history, which he approaches from the point of view of its usefulness for philosophy and those who pursue "eternal knowledge". History provides only isolated facts without attempting to see beyond them. Following this logic, history proves a simple database of the past. Aristotle does not deny reading some meaning into such a collection of occurrences;

however, this task should belong to any other branch of knowledge but history, for history per se does not imply speculation or analysis. Therefore, what was comprehended by the term "history" in Aristotle's times is different from its modern understanding.

A more contemporary interpretation of the term suggests a much wider meaning. Besides signifying "all the events that happened in the past" (*Oxford Dictionary*), history is also related to achieving something outstanding (for instance, "to make history") or a compendium of rules and causes that shape the course of historical development.

One of the most significant arguments against history being a simple mass of events and a particularly noticeable development of the philosophy of time was presented by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831). In *Philosophy of Nature*, he claims: "But everything does not happen, appear, and pass in time; time itself is this becoming, arising, and passing away... things do not pass away because they are in time, but are themselves that which is temporal" (231). The statement opposes Aristotle's view (despite a common perception of Hegel as a successor of the Aristotelian tradition), for it transforms time into a concept in its own right, not just a tool to apply to other "true" concepts. It is relevant to mention here Michael Murray's conclusion on Hegel's vision of the end of the world, which for Hegel is a logical destination of the Spirit's development: "the Hegelian eschaton is the end that constitutes a new beginning, built on the newly established foundation of temporalized Spirit" ("Time in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*", 704), hence proving the parallel between Hegel's view and the Christian doctrine. Another

evident association is Eliot's "In my beginning is my end", which is the main theme of "East Coker", although unlike Hegel, throughout the quartet he diminishes any differentiation between beginning and end, and while for Hegel the sequence is linear for Eliot it is definitely not.[1]

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Modernism elaborated a new perspective on time and history in even more detail through such philosophers as José Ortega y Gasset (1883-1955), Robin George Collingwood (1889-1943), and Benedetto Croce (1866-1952).

In *History as a System* (1935), Ortega y Gasset presents his view that the truth of reality is influenced by every historical epoch because every person has his/her own perception of it. History, as well as reality, is relative and depends on a given individual and a specific moment of time. Ortega y Gasset sees history as an "inexorable chain of human experiences" (38), emphasising personal and individual experiences. Furthermore, for him, history acquires meaning through human actions. Consequently, he argues that we are free in our actions through which individuals create history. Of course, in a world where everything is relative, there are no universal principles or absolute truths. In view of the continuity of the historical process, he further elaborates that the past generates the present, which, in turn, entails the future, or inter-conditionality of all time, the unbreakable ties between all its parts.

[1] Hegel and his relation with Eliot is further discussed in Chapter 3.

In his seminal text *History, Its Theory and Practice* (1921), Benedetto Croce argued that history develops together with philosophy, and called for "the recognition of the identity of philosophy with history" (61). According to this perspective, the essence of philosophy is history, and history employs philosophical concepts because historical facts are accompanied by their interpretation, which requires a corresponding philosophical framework. Croce also affirmed that initially, history derived its method from art, which, in his understanding, is "the individual intuitive vision" and, as such, a type of knowledge. So history started by using the tools of art in order to critique historical occurrences, eventually embracing the philosophical apparatus. Consequently, he excludes history from the list of sciences, as he maintains that they are concerned with general, rather than individual concepts, which is the field of history. For him, history is a form of art due not only to its capacity to describe or interpret the past but not to understand it.

Collingwood also considered history as one of the principal aspects of his philosophical system. He expressed his thoughts on the subject in *The Idea of History* (1946), arguing that the past is a full-fledged part of the present reality. The problem with this suggestion is that we become incapable of perceiving the past directly; as a result, we have to deal with testimonies and various criteria of verifiability. Collingwood also claims that although history describes and interprets the past, it is important to take into account that it is "only that that pertains to the thoughts of men and actions which derive from those" (216). Many past events and occurrences remain outside the field of historical interest because not everything is a subject of history. Yet, all the facts that are to become its parts are tightly interconnected and cannot be dissociated from all the other facts of the past; they

interact and exist only due to interpretations presented by historians. As regards the meaning of history, Collingwood states that only through our understanding of history and of the past do we attain self-knowledge.

The view shared by the three Modernist philosophers was that the past is alive, or, as Rik Peters puts it in *History as Thought and Action*, they believed "in the historicity of reality" (629). All of them claimed the importance of the past as the driving force of the present. By depriving history of a closed system image, they invested it with the active capacity of interpretation, which makes historians both archivists and creators of history, and turns every human being into a historian.

2.2 In Search of Modernism

These Modernist ideas conveyed a whole new perspective on the world. For numerous Modernist writers, primarily Pound and Eliot, "historical understanding became a way of uncovering the past realities that live in the present" (Patea "Pound and Eliot's Sense of History and Tradition as Re-Lived Experience", 55). Furthermore, although different Modernist groups had varied and often opposing views, the perception of history united the diverse schools and practices of Modernism. Whether we are to consider Symbolists with their nostalgic perception of the past or Futurists' rejection of the value of the past, it is evident that history was the main concern of Modernism.

In an attempt to systematise the understanding of this diverse period, Michael Whitworth, in his introduction to *Modernism,* points out ten features that

characterise Modernist literature in general (16-17). According to him, a Modernist text depicts modern life, especially urban life, and shows ambivalence towards it. Modernist literature is challenging, in the sense that it makes use of a wide range of references (literary, cultural, and linguistic). A Modernist text removes many of the devices that could help the reader to make sense of the text; it combines an orderly past with a chaotic present, believes that art can transcend the disorder of the present and it experiments with time, implying a broader philosophy in which time is non-linear. A Modernist text also frequently employs mythic allusion and patterning as an "organising structure", often takes man in his primitive state as a point of reference and, significantly, displays an awareness of the complexity of mind and self. An important theme is a contrast between the individual and the "herd" or "mass", or the elite and the masses. Modernist writers distinguish between abstraction and empathy, often claiming to prefer the former. They also prefer the concrete to the abstract. Finally, the subject matter of modernist texts is sometimes controversial. Whitworth notes that he deliberately omits two more features stated by Marjorie Perloff, which are "the artist as hero" and that "modernism is international" (Whitworth *Modernism*, 17).

The latter point is of particular significance for my thesis which aims at bridging the gap between Western and Russian cultures. Modernism was one of many movements that united the West with Russia. For instance, Romanticism, Gothic fiction, and Neo-Classicism prospered in both the West and Russia. However, the origins of other movements were in the West and only eventually would spread to the borders of Russia. In some cases, this took a short time, as in Romanticism: its European origin dates from 1780, while the first Russian

Romantic work, *Ludmila* by Vasily Zhukovsky (1783-1852), was created in 1808. Western Gothic fiction started with the novel *The Castle of Otranto* published by Horace Walpole (1717-1797) in 1794, whereas Russian readers became acquainted with the genre through the Romantics; hence, Gothic novels appeared in Russia almost fifteen years after their emergence in England. The spread of Neo-Classicism in Russia took place at the very end of the nineteenth century, yet Europe was introduced to it in the seventeenth century.

The picture is different when it comes to Modernism. Not only did Modernism start in Russia around the same time as in the West but also Russian artists and musicians were in the vanguard of the movement. The fact that the turn to a new way of thinking and creating was happening simultaneously on both sides of the border of the Russian Empire contrasts the experience of previous cultural movements.

Before the twentieth century, Russia sought the achievements of the West, generally following the West's patterns while enriching them with local traditions, but Russia was rarely perceived as an active force in world culture. As a result, barely any Russian work was translated into other languages or introduced to the Western world. Even such major figures of Realism as Leo Tolstoy and Feodor Dostoevsky, as significant as they were to become for the West, appeared on the European scene with an almost twenty-year lag.

Modernism, however, overcame this "Western initiator – Russian follower" pattern and put Russia in the spotlight of European tendencies. As Emily Finer indicates, "It is generally acknowledged that Russian creative artists of this time

were clearly influenced by and often themselves influenced West European and American modernism" (*The Oxford Handbook of Modernisms*, 838). Hence, for the first time in centuries of cultural relations between the West and Russia, the two parts of the world were equal.

Nonetheless, the parallel-developing and inter-influential Modernisms of Russia and the West were full of differences. This is particularly true in relation to the latter because of the variety of countries and cultures that compose the West. As the present research is focused on an Anglo-American Modernist, T.S. Eliot and a Russian one, Anna Akhmatova, I shall concentrate on the poetry of both traditions in the times of Modernism.

The peak of Anglo-American Modernism manifested itself between 1910 and 1925 (*The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*, Levinson, 9). In Russia, the era of Modernism is associated with the so-called Silver Age, which prospered from about 1890 to 1925 (*Russian Silver Age Poetry*, S. Forrester, ed., XL), which is around the same time as Western Modernism. The Silver Age is so named to highlight its hereditary character in relation to the Golden Age of Russian culture, which included the years from 1810 to 1830. The latter is mainly associated with the work of Alexander Pushkin (1799-1837), who is considered in his native land "the Sun of Russian Poetry". Despite the traditional belief that as a metal, gold is more valuable than silver, and the fact that the term "Golden Age" has served as a metaphor for the times of prosperity, it is commonly admitted that the Silver Age was an even finer hour for Russian poetry than the Golden Age of Pushkin. The term "the Silver Age" concerns other areas of creativity apart from poetry; the

music of Alexander Scriabin (1871-1915) and Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971), Sergei Diaghilev's (1872-1929) Ballets Russes, the avant-garde painting of Kazimir Malevich (1879-1935), Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944), or Marc Chagall (1887-1985) were among cultural achievements of the Silver Age. Another important part of cultural life in the period, similar to Western Modernism, was philosophy, associated with works by Lev Shestov (1886-1938) and Nikolai Berdyaev (1874-1948).

Some of the most prominent representatives of Modernist poetry in the Anglo-American tradition include Thomas Stearns Eliot, Ezra Pound, Wallace Stevens (1879-1955), William Carlos Williams (1883-1963), Marianne Moore (1887-1972), and H.D. (1886-1961). In relation to Russian poetry of the period – outstanding examples are Anna Akhmatova, Alexander Blok (1880-1921), Valery Bryusov (1873-1924), Osip Mandelstam, Marina Tsvetaeva (1892-1941), Nikolai Gumilev, and Velimir Khlebnikov (1885-1922). One striking feature in both cases is the presence of women. While even in the Western tradition, it was unusual (when considering the most significant figures of Romanticism or Classicism, for instance), for Russia, it was revolutionary.

Changes in ways of thinking brought not only an amendment to gender underrepresentation, but it also changed the literary landscape for representatives of different backgrounds, nationalities, and spiritual beliefs. As Sibelan Forrester and Martha Kelly indicate, "the Silver Age also saw the emergence of a much wider range of poets than earlier periods: the poets in this collection represent a striking variety of class, gender, religion, ethnicity, and sexuality" (*Russian Silver Age*

Poetry, XXXVIII). The gender issue is of particular significance to the present research, for it is dedicated to establishing a parallel between a male Anglo-American poet and a female Russian poet. Akhmatova would have appreciated the comparison as she never liked the word "poetess". Her ambition was to be a great poet, not the greatest poetess.

Having discussed the challenge that Modernism raises to anyone who wishes to find its definition and marked some of the general features of the movement, I shall now respond to the challenge from the inside. What was Modernism to the Modernists in question? As William Skaff formulates it, for Eliot, Modernism was "a distinct artistic attitude by overcoming both the subjective irrationality of Romanticism and the collective rationality of Classicism" (*The Philosophy of T.S. Eliot*, 7). This definition is not the only one for Modernism, but it is of interest as it establishes the connection of Modernism with earlier movements: it opposes Modernism to Romanticism and Classicism and aspires to a different goal for the new current, the quest for the fine line between subjectivity and rationality.

However, the quest for the middle ground between "subjective irrationality" and "collective rationality" as well as opposition to previous cultural movements leads to paradoxical results. The contradiction consists in that Modernists aimed at "making it new", to use the Pound's well-known imperative, yet emulated their cultural ancestors to varying degrees and often borrowed from them. In Bell's words: "if the forefather appears to have anticipated the works of 'modern' writers, then their claim to be modern is undermined; yet, if cultural legitimacy depends upon a connection to previous generations, such a search for forefather cannot be

avoided**" (***The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*, 22-23). The paradoxes underlying the foundation of Modernists' thinking provides a reason why the movement provoked the birth of numerous sub-movements, for each of them intended to solve the imposed inconsistencies in their own way.

2.3 In Response to Symbolism: Imagism, Vorticism, and Acmeism

One of the previous generations whose experience Anglo-American Modernists were adapting to their purposes were the French Symbolists. For instance, Eliot and Pound renewed poetic language through the influence of Jules Laforgue (1860-1887), Theophile Gautier (1811-1872), and Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867). Later, though, both Eliot and Pound opposed the movement and found the concept of symbol too vague. However, Russian Symbolists were Modernists themselves. Even more, they were the most prominent and longest-lasting school in the Silver Age. Therefore, for Anglo-American Modernism, Symbolist poetry was a source to borrow from, yet it had already appeared as a core part of Russian Modernism, making the role of Symbolism in the Russian tradition more prominent than in the West.

While Symbolism was influential at the start of Russian Modernism, many other Silver Age movements also arose in response to the Symbolists. One quotation by Akhmatova, who opposed Symbolism, is particularly relevant in this respect:

> The XXth century began in the autumn of 1914, together with the war, just as the XIX began with the Congress of Vienna. Symbolism is indisputably a XIX-century phenomenon. Our revolt against Symbolism was completely legitimate because we felt ourselves to be people of the XX century and we did not wish to remain in the preceding one (Nayman, 195).

In spite of Russian Symbolism being a part of Russian Modernism, Akhmatova, like many other poets of the time, felt that there was something obsolete about the Symbolists as if they did not belong to the same time as her contemporaries, even though in the course of Russian Literature, Symbolism co-existed with those opposed to it. Hence, Symbolism for Anglo-American Modernism was seen as belonging to a different era, which it was, chronologically, while Symbolism for Russian Modernism also belonged in the previous century but from the point of view of ideas, rather than history.

The "revolt against Symbolism" to which Akhmatova refers is the poetic movement of Acmeism, also known as Adamism. It was founded by poets Nikolai Gumilev, Anna Akhmatova, and Osip Mandelstam in 1911. Even though it lasted only four years (1911-1914), Acmeism had a high impact on the poetic process of Russia in general and on Akhmatova's creative career. The two names of the movement are self-explicit: Acmeism as in the "acme" of poetic inspiration, and Adamism as a reference to Adam who gave a name to everything in the world (*Russian Silver Age Poetry*, XLVII).

Like the Imagists and Vorticists, Acmeists defined themselves against Symbolists, considering them too engrossed in mystery and exotica. Symbolists were often laughed at for overusing symbols, as they sometimes lost their meaning

even for their own creators. Nayman mentions Akhmatova's satirical recollection: "If a Symbolist was told, 'This is a weakness in your poem', he would reply arrogantly, 'But you are pointing to the mystery'" (*Remembering Anna Akhmatova,* 15). As a consequence, the Symbolists and their work seemed too detached from real life and often were incomprehensible and obscure to such a degree that even their poetic peers failed to grasp the meaning, while to the common reader the Symbolists appeared pretentious, bizarre, and foreign.

As much as Acmeists proclaimed a new turn in poetry developed in their works, which opposed Symbolism, they still were much influenced by their predecessors. This is evident in the contrast between Acmeism and another avant-garde movement, Futurism. Its representatives went much further in rejecting the past than Acmeists. Velimir Khlebnikov, Aleksei Kruchyonykh (1886-1968), and Vladimir Mayakovsky (1893-1930), among others, defied traditional rhythms and structures, which were still prevalent in Acmeist poetry. As with Western Futurists, the Russians drew their inspiration from technological progress and aimed at transforming literature both ideas-wise and visually. Futurists deconstructed traditional verse turning it into riddles, political slogans, and sometimes even total nonsense. Their experiments proved highly influential, which is demonstrated, for instance, by Marjorie Perloff's study *Avant-Garde, Avant Guerre, and the Language of Rupture* (University of Chicago, 2003).

Acmeists though distanced themselves from Symbolists, as is affirmed by Gumilev in "The Heritage of Symbolism and Acmeism" (1913). In it, he plays tribute to the Symbolists' achievements admitting that "symbolism was a good

father"[2] for Acmeism (*Poeticheskiye Techeniya v Russkoi Literature XIX-XX veka: Literaturniye Manifesti and Khudozhestvennaya Praktika.* 83). He goes on to state that Acmeism appreciates the role of the symbol as proved by the Symbolists but does not intend "to sacrifice to it other ways of poetical influence" (84). Gumilev expresses hope that the upcoming movement will unite within itself four elements, namely "god, and sin, and death, and eternity" (87).

In order to achieve such unity and in contrast to the Symbolists' fascination with the inconceivable and exotic, Acmeism proclaimed the importance of the ordinary and familiar. Clarity, a down-to-earth approach and the view of poetry as craft were the foundations of Acmeism. In *The Poetic Pilgrimage,* Haight provides a precise and worthwhile definition of Acmeism:

> The outlook they [Gumilev, Mandelstam, Akhmatova] shared was exactly in line with what the manifestoes of Acmeism demand – a return to earth. With this went a deep understanding of the richness of European culture and the close ties between poets of all ages. At the core of Acmeism was a refusal to escape into another world, a conviction that God can be found through the here and now on earth, that life is a blessing to be lived (19).

This "deep understanding of the richness of European culture" is indeed an essential feature of the Acmeists. Akhmatova, for instance, referred to Europe as "sparkling intellectual space" (Nayman *Remembering Anna Akhmatova,* 99). Mandelstam phrased the concept as "nostalgia for world culture", which manifested itself, firstly, in the familiarity of Acmeist poets with iconic texts of the West (from Classical Antiquity to T.S. Eliot), and, secondly, in numerous references to Western

[2] My translation from Russian

culture on multiple levels (from direct quotes to subtle usage of poetic forms). The latter created something akin to a constant dialogue between cultures and times.

Besides being familiar with the European tradition and inspired by them from afar, Russian Modernist poets were able to look more closely at European culture. Before the Russian Revolution, many of them travelled to Europe and lived there for some time. Numerous connections with the West is one of the features that differentiate the Silver Age from the Golden Age, or any other time in Russian history, for that matter. Alexander Pushkin, for instance, the brightest figure of the Golden Age, was familiar with Western Romantics and was particularly influenced by Lord Byron. Yet, he never crossed the borders of the Russian Empire, which was not uncommon for his times.

Unlike the nineteenth century, the twentieth century opened "the window to Europe" for Russian writers, poets, and philosophers. It needs mentioning that the expression "to open the window to Europe" is commonly used in Russian and comes from the times of Peter the Great (1672-1725), the Russian Emperor who intended to westernise Russia. Although some of his successors followed this policy, Europe was not as accessible as Peter the Great intended. At the turn of the nineteenth century, though, the conditions changed due to the political and economic situation in Russia and to a shift in mentality. If somebody wanted to claim to be cultivated, travel abroad was an unspoken requirement. As a result of this openness, members of the Russian cultural elite participated fully in the literary culture of Europe before and during World War I (*Russian Silver Age Poetry*, XLII). The Bolshevik revolution put an end to the free flow of ideas.

While the origins of Akhmatova's poetry were in short-lived Acmeism, Eliot's work is concomitant with two Modernist movements of the twentieth century, namely Imagism and Vorticism, and gravitates towards the aesthetics that valued concrete images and objectivity in poetry. Both Vorticism and Imagism elaborated poetic aesthetics that insisted on accurate language and precise images. For instance, in the famous Imagist manifesto "A Few Don'ts of an Imagiste", Ezra Pound forbids any "superfluous word" or "adjective, which does not reveal something", warns against abstractions and advocates for the concrete image (*Poetry,* March 1913). The Imagists fought against the previously wide-spread ardour for melancholy and vague symbols, essentially, against poetry detached from real life. Like the Acmeists, they chose to focus on human life and feelings here and now while criticising Symbolism and premising their aesthetics in opposition to it. Pound explained:

> Imagisme is not symbolism. The symbols dealt in "association", that is, in a sort of allusion, almost of allegory. They degraded the symbol to the status of a word. They made it a form of metonymy. One can be grossly "symbolic", for example, by using the term "cross" to mean "trial". The symbolist's *symbols* have a fixed value, like numbers in arithmetic, like 1, 2, and 7. The imagiste's images have a variable significance, like the signs *a, b,* and *x* in algebra. ("Vorticism", 84)

Naturally, Acmeism has repeatedly been compared to Imagism. One of the first and most canonical comparisons between the two movements is found in Elaine Rusinko's article titled "Russian Acmeism and Anglo-American Imagism". Discussing the two, Rusinko points out that neither at the time of its foundation was aware of the other's existence. Despite this, Acmeism and Imagism followed surprisingly similar principles. What differed, though, was their role in the literary process of their respective languages, because if Imagism is considered the

beginning of modern Anglo-American poetry, Acmeism is eclipsed by more experimental Russian Symbolists and Futurists.

Speaking of the parallels between Imagists and Acmeists, Rusinko discusses the emphasis on control and technique which is exemplified by Pound's famous "In a Station of the Metro" and Gumilev's "The girl with eyes like a gazelle":

> The apparition of these faces in a crowd;
> Petals on a wet, black bough.
>
> The girl with eyes like a gazelle
> Is marrying an American —
> Why did Columbus discover America?[3]

It is evident that in their form, both texts drive their inspiration from the Japanese poems, hokku. What strikes in Pound's poem is its efficiency, all the fourteen chosen words are absolutely vital, and the poem is composed of only two lines. Coincidentally, Gumilev's text is of thirteen words in the original, although of three lines. The parallels proceed beyond the mere form, for as hokku, both poems represent a reflection on reality. If Pound chooses difficulty in distinguishing individuals in the faceless metro (the reality which saw its birth in the second half of the nineteenth century) as an image of a life emerging from the darkness of the underworld and bound to return there, Gumilev focuses on what was a major concern for him – the rising influence of the USA as a result of its prospering

[3] Pound's text and Gumilev's translation into English as quoted in E. Rusenko's "Russian Acmeism and Anglo-American Imagism".
In Russian: Вот девушка с газельими глазами
Выходит замуж за американца...
Зачем Колумб Америку открыл?
(Гумилев, Н. *Стихотворения и поэмы*. Ленинград: Советский писатель, 1988)

economy. The Russian poet saw it as a threat to the innocent "girl with eyes like a gazelle", whose marriage to an American is depicted as erroneous if not fatal.

Another common feature is the resemblance between T.S. Eliot's notion of "the mind of Europe" and Acmeist "nostalgia for world culture" as formulted by Osip Mandelstam, who made the apology of European culture. Mandelstam's definition of one of the Acmeist principles lacks an exact source. Peter Robinson, mentioning its origin, is convinced that the poet used the phrase either in a conversation in Leningrad's Press House or at a lecture in the city of Voronezh ("Nostalgia for World Culture", 102). Yet, the idea, although phrased differently, appears in several essays[5] by the poet. One of the most illustrative quotations is found in "The Word and Culture"; here Mandelstam describes world culture as an interdependent system utterly sensitive to any sound appearing within it:

> In sacred frenzy, poets speak the language of all times, all cultures. Nothing is impossible. As the room of a dying man is open to everyone, so the door of the old world is flying open before the crowd. Suddenly, everything becomes public property... The word has become, not a seven-stop, but a thousand-stop reed, instantly animated by the breathing of all the ages (*Complete Poetry of Osip Emilevich Mandelstam*, 116).

It is true that Acmeists were familiar with Asian poetry too, for instance, yet, unlike Anglo-American Modernists, the Russian group did not incorporate its forms or allusions. Another example is Nikolai Gumilev's poetry. He travelled several times to Africa, yet he did not establish any profound contact with African traditions. So, when Africa appears in his verses, it is very visual and distinct, yet it is Africa perceived by a foreigner who is impressed by the exotic.

The sources that Acmeists would draw upon again and again were Western, such as Ancient Greek and Roman literature, Medieval history, Dante, the Renaissance, Shakespeare, among many others. Considering this evidence, it may well be argued that Mandelstam's formula is more of a poetic image than a precise term or elaborated theory. Above all, the "nostalgia for world culture" reflects the longing of Russian poets to finally be one with the West, which is seen as the cradle of civilisation. It also highlights the unity of Europe, which is not presented as any specific country but as an even greater whole, the world.

Eliot's reference to "the mind of Europe" in his seminal essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919) resembles Acmeist nostalgia:

> He [poet] must be aware that the mind of Europe — the mind of his own country — a mind which he learns in time to be much more important than his own private mind — is a mind which changes, and that this change is a development which abandons nothing *en route,* which does not superannuate either Shakespeare, or Homer, or the rock drawing of the Magdalenian draughtsmen (*The Sacred Wood,* 6).

However, Eliot's notion of "the mind of Europe" is a still more developed concept than Mandelstam's "nostalgia for world culture". Similarly to "world culture", the meaning of "the mind of Europe" is, in fact, different from its lexical form, for what it addresses is not the actual mind of Europe but European cultural tradition. Viorica Patea affirms in "Eliot's Modernist Manifesto" that Eliot ceaselessly employed his postulate in his poems and strove even further by also addressing Eastern philosophies and beliefs:

> In the two major poems that mark the beginning and end of his literary career, from *The Waste Land* (1922) to *Four Quartets* (1942), Eliot's

> poetic work attempted to articulate the universal language of the common spirituality of East and West, Hinduism, Platonism and Christianity (34).

This cultural tradition is essentially a new, "unified sensibility", which recognises no temporal or spatial borders striving for Western. By doing so, Eliot opposed some of his contemporaries' common views:

> Whereas the postmodern hermeneutic reduces culture to relativism, to fragmented narrations, confined in their own singularity and relevant only in a particular context, Eliot's defense of cultural diversity and pluralism draws on the very idea of unity and universality. (Patea "Eliot, Dante and the Poetics of a 'Unified Sensibility'", 25).

In the face of such post-war aloofness and severance, such unity of thought and belief and consequently a united Europe were most needed.

Perhaps, the same need to overcome differences so as to attain unity and wholeness appears in the notion suggested by Mandelstam. His "world culture" as well as Eliot's "the mind of Europe" refers to the classical traditions of antiquity. Defending the solidarity of Western civilisation, Mandelstam and Eliot oppose the unity of culture to the dissociation of politics, which have separated countries for ages.

2.4 Imagist and Acmeist Language

As one of the principal cultural coordinates, language was of particular importance to Acmeists and their Anglo-American contemporaries. It might have been related to the influence of Henri Bergson (1859–1941), whose philosophy was another unifying factor for Russian and Western Modernisms.

As Heraclitus's role in Eliot's vision is established in academic research, Bergson's impact is also evident and has been agreed upon by numerous scholars. Moody concludes that the way Eliot thought of the relation between mind and time was borrowed from Bergson (*T.S. Eliot. Poet,* 26). Schuchard affirms that Eliot experienced "a temporary conversion to Bergsonism" (*Eliot's Dark Angel*). Skaff agrees with both and states that Eliot's "temporary conversion to Bergsonism" was the only time when another person would inspire Eliot to such an extent (*The Philosophy of T.S. Eliot,* 24). However, like with Bradley, Eliot's enchantment with Bergson did not last, although, his disappointment with the Bergsonian worldview was not complete.

The main link between Bergson and Russian poetry is through the poetry of Osip Mandelstam, a co-founder of Acmeism and a close friend of Akhmatova. However, it is not only in Mandelstam's work that we find Bergson's worldview, it is also present in Akhmatova's. Reeder notes that these repercussions are particularly evident in the technique that Akhmatova turned into one of her tokens, which consists in avoiding linear sequencing in preference to intuitive ones, based on irrational associations and personal experiences (*Anna Akhmatova: Poet and Prophet,* 47).

Bergson's impact on Modernists is studied in Hilary Fink's *Bergson and Russian Modernism,* which affirms that the philosophy of intuition lies at the foundation of Modernism in both East and West. Fink holds that the very Russian language contains a Bergson-like worldview, as "its use of perfective and imperfective aspect reflects a very Bergsonian duality between objective and

subjective time, or between time considered spatially and time as duration" (9). As a result, Fink establishes a justified parallel between Bergson's emphasis on clarity and the modernist search for new ways of expression.

Clarity of language was proclaimed by Acmeist principles among essential characteristics of the movement, which may have to do with Bergson's influence on the group and specifically on Mandelstam. Clarity involved transparent terms and clear images, ideas shared by the Imagists and Eliot's *objective correlative*. ("Hamlet", 1919, *The Sacred Wood,* 100).

Ezra Pound, one of founders of the Imagists, addressed it in one of his letters:

> Moreover, I should like the name "Imagisme" to retain some sort of a meaning. It stands, or I should like it to stand for hard light, clear edges. I cannot trust any democratized committee to maintain that standard. Some will be splay-footed and some sentimental. (*Selected Letters,* 38)

Insisting on the "clear", he also implied hardness as one of the defining features of Imagism:

> By 'hardness' I mean a quality which is in poetry nearly always a virtue—I can think of no case where it is not. By softness I mean an opposite quality which is not always a fault. (*Literary Essays,* 285)

However, the intention to make their work precise and explicit did not make it in any way simplistic, for simplicity of language does not equate to simplicity of ideas.

A similar poetic duty is described by Mikhail Kuzmin, whose essay "On Beautiful Clarity" (1910) was one of the precursors of Acmeism. This is a summary of its precepts:

> write logically, preserving the clarity of people's speech, having your own style, feel clearly the appropriateness of a given form for a given content and suitable language for it, be a skilful craftsman as in detail so in general, be clear in your expressions[6] (*Poeticheskiye Techeniya v Russkoi Literature XIX-XX veka: Literaturniye Manifesti and Khudozhestvennaya Praktika*, 102)

Michael Levinson describes the modernist phenomenon as a linguistic "turn", in the sense that rather than describing or reflecting the world, language was now seen to form it (*The Cambridge Companion to Modernism,* 16). Highlighting the significance of language, Acmeists also used the term Adamism to define themselves. This name demonstrated their particular respect for the first man and his power to name all things and creatures in the world, for "whatever he called each living creature, 'that was its name'" (Nayman *Remembering Anna Akhmatova*, 39). Therefore, instead of being a passive communication tool, language is seen as being endowed with a life of its own and the power of creation, or destruction. Thus, language acquires a potency it did not have before.

The new perspective on language was logically followed by an assertion of the special role for the art of words, literature. Michael Bell indicates that "the central philosophical feature of Modernism is its claim for literature itself as a supreme and irreplaceable form of understanding" (*The Cambridge Companion to Modernism,* 29). While language was to form reality, the destiny of literary works was to configure a human vision of the world and, consequently, to shape the world itself. Literature was able to achieve this goal by revitalising culture, which, according to the Modernists, was in decline.

Like Anglo-American Modernists who invested culture with a resurrecting capacity, Russian Modernists also made a high claim for literature, and the poet had the role of a cultural hero. In Nayman's opinion, for creative people of the 1890s-1910s, art was a service not only in the usual sense of the word but also in the religious sense (*Remembering Anna Akhmatova*, 39). The religious aspect must be connected with the history of Orthodox Christianity in Russia, which has always been one of the vital elements of Russian selfhood, perhaps, even more so than Catholicism or Protestantism for Westerners. Yet, what Nayman refers to is a deeply-rooted belief in an overarching mission. Therefore, for Russian Modernists, literature was not only their devotion but also a sacred service that they, as bearers of the gift to write, had to fulfil.

The idea of language as a creative force and literature as a special mission was also close to Russian Modernists because of the peculiarities of the Russian mentality. In *The Cambridge Introduction to Russian Literature*, Caryl Emerson considers the Russian Word, the Russian Space, and the Human Face as three foundations of the Russian worldview. Following this line of argument, it is easy to see that those Modernist ideas found the perfect ground in Russian Modernism. Their mother tongue was recognised by the Russians as much more of a phenomenon even before Modernists came to a conclusion on how participative language is in shaping our reality. Hence, Modernism in Russia brought forward latent ideas that had existed within the nation for centuries, becoming one of the contributing factors to the tremendous flourishing of the arts in Russia during the Silver Age.

* * *

Modernism was the last cultural link between Russia and the West, the link which has not been restored since the October Revolution in 1917. Apart from the impressive geographical scope, the movement was characterised by the unprecedented role of Russia in its development, for instead of being led, as had happened so many times before, Russian artists became some of the leaders of the avant-garde, engaging in a dialogue with Western colleagues. On both sides, we notice a variety of authors, which was manifested in diverse nationalities, backgrounds, and ideological convictions and which was unusual in comparison to the cultural movements of previous centuries. Moreover, for the first time in history, the outline of most prominent activists of a cultural movement was not composed of male artists only; women artists appeared with increasing frequency, and the significance of their talent was as acknowledged as that of their male peers.

Despite their numerous ideological and aesthetic differences, Western and Russian Modernists did agree on the most important points. Modernists at both ends of Europe sought the middle ground between radical objectivity and extreme subjectivity, especially Eliot who found in tradition the via media between these antagonistic positions and hence, claimed the interconnectedness of literary tradition throughout time. History, language and literature became the active forces of human existence. A possible explanation of the closeness of Russian and Western Modernists' views may be found in the root of Modernist beliefs, which lies in philosophy, celebrated by both Westerners and Russians.

Chapter 3

The Structure of *Poem Without a Hero* and *Four Quartets*

3.1 Time of Composition

T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets* and Anna Akhmatova's *Poem Without a Hero* belong to the poetry of the twentieth century. Eliot started working on the *Quartets* before World War II, and "Burnt Norton" was published as early as 1936, yet he repeatedly affirmed that without the war "Burnt Norton" would have remained a separate piece. It was the conflict that made Eliot re-evaluate his own being and that of all humanity. In 1940, he published the second part, "East Coker", of what he already knew would become a four-fold work, a major project, which he had finished by 1942. At the time when the second quartet was published in the United Kingdom, Akhmatova was beginning her artistic journey in *Poem Without a Hero*. Thus, her poem also started under the impact of World War II.

In his memoirs, Anatoly Nayman mentions that Eliot's poetry became a recurrent topic for Akhmatova in the 1960s, at the time when Eliot became particularly recognised in the USSR, mainly thanks to the Nobel Prize and various translations of his work that appeared in the Communist state during the more relaxed Khrushchev's era (*Remembering Anna Akhmatova*, 25). However, Vyacheslav Ivanov recalls that Akhmatova received *Four Quartets* as early as 1949 from Boris Pasternak (1890-1960), a renowned poet and writer, who had been given the book but who claimed that he had insufficient English to appreciate the poem (*Vospominaniya ob Anne Akhmatovoy,* 474). Olga Ushakova, in her study on the

kinship between Eliot's and Akhmatova's views as reflected in *The Waste Land* and *Poem Without a Hero,* points out that "Akhmatova's turn to Eliot was a natural turn to a poetic tradition unbroken by the rude intervention of the Bolshevik cultural politics and the triumph of socialist realism" ("A Word Which is not Mine", 76-77). Akhmatova admitted her debt to Eliot in private conversations with her friends, and she made it clear to her readers by choosing one of the most emblematic lines of the *Quartets* as an epigraph to the last fragment of the *Poem*, "In my beginning is my end". Akhmatova started working on the *Poem* in 1940, when she was not yet familiar with Eliot's work. While her text differs in structure and lyrical mode to the *Quartets*, it is likely that Eliot's poem served as inspiration.

Apart from the significance of the war for both poems, their "historicity" is found in the way they were created, which is particularly relevant in relation to *Poem Without a Hero*. As impressed as Eliot was by the grim circumstances of the war years, the publication of his works reflecting his attitude towards current affairs was unproblematic. Eliot was already an internationally renowned poet, essayist, and editor, and unlike Akhmatova, he needed no approval or consent to write about the matters that concerned him.

Akhmatova's experience is strikingly different, given the totalitarian regime under which she lived. Her fame in her time rivalled, even surpassed, Eliot's. That Feinstein titled her study of Akhmatova's life and work *Anna of All the Russias* (2006) exemplifies the poet's importance for the Russians. Like a patriarch of the Orthodox Church, she set up for her people a model of life-giving values and became their voice when it was taken from them. Her collection of poems *Anno*

Domini (1922) and *From Six Books* (1940) alongside war poetry narrated Russian history, the pain and suffering of its people, and thus, proved Akhmatova uniquely suited to such work.

By choosing to stay in her home country after the 1917 Revolution, Akhmatova also chose to become homeless. The prevailing policy of the Bolsheviks was to abolish all private property, and whatever was private now became public. For Akhmatova, a proscribed citizen, it meant that she depended on the mercy of her friends, for not only did she have no real status or stability but she was also forced to share her life with others, not all of whom might have had amiable feelings towards her. Unfortunately, such was the destiny of every commoner in the USSR who did not belong to the Nomenklatura. The so-called *kommunalka* were communal apartments which had once belonged to one family but were now divided between three or more inhabitants, and often a whole family shared a single room. The *kommunalkas* became the symbol of Soviet uniformity and constituted the most common type of accommodation. On the other hand, the Soviet political elite and a few close to them enjoyed the spaciousness of their own flats and country houses.

The lack of privacy typical of *kommunalkas* was often both unpleasant and dangerous for Akhmatova, as another common practice in the Soviet Union was for neighbours to spy and report on each other. Informers' motivations varied from the objective of taking over someone else's room and possessions to actual loyalty to the new regime; often enough, there was no other reason than envy or dislike. Even those that sincerely respected and supported the new regime might easily find

themselves behind bars and in labour camps, and for Akhmatova, a well-known poet from another era, the chances of such a destiny were considerably higher.

Living surrounded by hostility and unable to trust anybody, she employed *tainopis*, a method which consisted in memorising of the poems with the help of friends to avoid writing them down to be found by the secret police.[1] Akhmatova had to rely on memory as a hidden vault. That the *Poem* was not written but existed in the poet's and her friends' minds is significant. Since Akhmatova could not write down the lines of the *Poem*, she could never lay it aside completely, even for a moment. Throughout the more than twenty years of its, it was vividly and always with Akhmatova. It may be this constant attention to the *Poem,* multiplied by the time dedicated to it that turned it into her *Eugene Onegin*[2] or *The Divine Comedy* – a crowning work that would transcend her universe.

3.2 Foreword, Dedications, and Epigraphs

Before the readers of *Four Quartets* and *Poem Without a Hero* are to read the first lines of the poems, they need to pay attention to the introductory sections. While the *Poem* is preceded by a foreword, dedications, and an epigraph, the *Quartets* starts with two epigraphs.

[1] See Chapter 2.

[2] *Eugene Onegin* (1831) is a poem by Alexander Pushkin. It is the most known and praised work of his.

3.2.1 "In Place of a Foreword"

Given the difficult times and terrible circumstances under which Akhmatova wrote her poems, she begins *Poem Without a Hero* with a prologue in "In Place of a Foreword"[3] and three dedications to some of the most influential people in her life. She starts her with the following words:

> The first time this poem came to me was on the night of December 27, 1940, in the Fountain House, having sent, that autumn, one small fragment as a messenger ("You came to Russia from nowhere...").[4] (543)

The fragment that Akhmatova refers to is part of the *Poem* and is included in the second chapter of Part 1, "The Year Nineteen Thirteen". In this fragment, she talks about one of her closest friends, Olga Glebova-Sudeikina, whom Akhmatova considered her double.

The Foreword links the work with Akhmatova's friends and fellow citizens who were her first listeners: "I hear their voices and remember them when I read the poem aloud, and for me this invisible chorus is an everlasting justification of the work" (543).[5] Thus, memory becomes the main origin and reference of *Poem*

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[3] In Russian: "Вместо предисловия"

[4] In Russian: Первый раз она пришла ко мне в Фонтанный Дом в ночь на 27 декабря 1940 г., прислав как вестника еще осенью один небольшой отрывок («Ты в Россию пришла из ниоткуда...»). (319)

[5] In Russian: "Их голоса я слышу и вспоминаю их, когда читаю поэму вслух, и этот тайный хор стал для меня навсегда оправданием этой вещи". (320)

Without a Hero, for the poetic text was aroused from the memories of Akhmatova's past and was developed in the memory of all those who impacted its creation.

Akhmatova also includes an introduction, and history is again the protagonist:

FROM THE YEAR NINETEEN FORTY
AS IF FROM A TOWER, I SURVEY EVERYTHING.
AS IF BIDDING FAREWELL AGAIN
TO WHAT I PARTED FROM LONG AGO,
AS IF CROSSING MYSELF
AND THEN DESCENDING TO DARK VAULTS[6]. (548)

Akhmatova is thorough with the date-keeping, as any chronicler should be. By taking on this role with such precision, she highlights the historicism of the *Poem*. The quoted lines are parallel to those expressed in "In Place of a Foreword", amplifying them with more of her personal history than the bare account of the circumstances by which the poem first "came to" Akhmatova.

In parallel with Eliot's clear localisation of each of the quartets, Akhmatova persists with equal precision in clarifying beneath the title of the poem the years of its creation. Apart from the foreword, she includes three dedications, and all of them bear the mark of the time and place of writing.

[6] In Russian: ИЗ ГОДА СОРОКОВОГО,
КАК С БАШНИ, НА ВСЕ ГЛЯЖУ.
КАК БУДТО ПРОЩАЮСЬ СНОВА
С ТЕМ, С ЧЕМ ДАВНО ПРОСТИЛАСЬ,
КАК БУДТО ПЕРЕКРЕСТИЛАСЬ
И ПОД ТЕМНЫЕ СВОДЫ СХОЖУ. (322)

3.2.2 Kniazev, Sudeikina, and Berlin: The Three Dedications

Akhmatova inscribes her poem to three people from the past but who were very much coeval with her: a friend that died too young and in vain, Vsevolod Kniazev (1891-1913); a friend who ran away from the consequences of her own choices, Olga Sudeikina (1885-1945); and a friend who came as if out of nowhere to give her new hope, Sir Isaiah Berlin (1909-1967). Such a sequence is reminiscent of Dante's "Inferno" (Kniazev who committed the deadly sin of violence against self), "Purgatorio" (Glebova-Sudeikina who lived with guilt), and surrogate "Paradiso" (Berlin who although belonging to a different world was Akhmatova's soul mate and appeared in her life when she had lost so many friends). The thread of history in *Poem Without a Hero* continues with these dedications, as Akhmatova interweaves her story with stories of the past, laying them down as an origin of the poem and as forever present.

The first dedication appeared as early as the poem itself, December 27, 1940, and addresses "Vs.K." The initials belong to Vsevolod Kniazev, a young officer who committed suicide for his love of Olga Sudeikina. The story of the love triangle Vsevolod Kniazev – Olga Sudeikina – Sergei Sudeikin (1882-1946) is obscure and does not need to be dealt with in detail here. What is relevant is that a death of such a young and aspiring man as Kniazev, and for something as silly as a failure in a rather trivial love affair remained impressed on Akhmatova for the rest of her life. As Feinstein describes it in *Anna of All the Russias*, "his [Kniazev's] suicide and Sudeikina's callous behaviour became an image for a whole group who thought themselves above conventional morality" (44). By "callous behaviour" Feinstein

means Sudeikina's apparent indifference to the death to which she had such an obvious connection. The dramatic and unnecessary death of young Kniazev became for Akhmatova a symbol of her generation, causing a drastic change in the course of history. The habitués of the cafe "Stray Dog"[7] became engrossed in their rather theatrical tragedies, and despite having the power to influence people, they did not foresee the impending real tragedy.

Having commemorated Vsevolod Kniazev, Akhmatova next turns to the one whom he considered responsible for his suicide, Olga Glebova-Sudeikina. As with the first dedication, in the second one, Akhmatova notes only the abbreviation "O.S" and when it was written, May 25, 1945. The date is surprising given that Olga's image was the first of the elements of the poem to come to Akhmatova, yet the earlier dedication is to Kniazev.

The third dedication addresses Akhmatova's meeting with Berlin, in Leningrad in 1945, after the end of World War II. In accordance with the two previous devotions, the poet specifies the date, as late as January 5, 1956. The only way to find out to whom this dedication refers is to be familiar with the story of the encounter that in Akhmatova's eyes shaped world history, not to mention her own destiny. In his memoir, Berlin recalls her certainty that they "inadvertently, by the mere fact of our meeting, had started the cold war and thereby changed the history of humankind" (Akhmatova *The Collected Poems,* 48). He holds that the poet overestimated the significance of their encounter, yet she had no doubt about it.

[7] A famous bar in Saint Petersburg that was the meeting point for artists and thinkers of the beginning of the twentieth century.

Although Berlin's scepticism is reasonable, Akhmatova's statement was not entirely untrue. It is unlikely that their meeting was the only or main reason for the Cold War, but it must have been one of the contributing factors. Considering that Stalin's interest in Akhmatova was on a par with the tension between the victors, it is very possible that in her welcoming of a foreigner, he saw betrayal and a threat to his authority.

3.2.3 Heraclitus

Both Akhmatova and Eliot introduce the main body of their poems with epigraphs. In his, Eliot pays his debt to Heraclitus, whom he considered a great philosopher (*The Poems of T.S. Eliot*, 907). Eliot chose two quotations in Greek from Heraclitus. Initially, they were attributed to "Burnt Norton" only, but in later publications of *Four Quartets*, the Greek phrases became an epigraph to the whole text, and Eliot himself confirmed that they could be seen as referring to all four parts. The quotations are open to interpretation, as is common with translation, and read as follows:

> *τοῦ λόγου δὲ ἐόντος ξυνοῦ ζώουσιν οἱ πολλοί*
> *ὡς ἰδίαν ἔχοντες φρόνησιν*
> *I. p. 77. Fr. 2.*
> *ὁδὸς ἄνω κάτω μία καὶ ὠυτή*
> *I. p. 89 Fr. 60.*[8]

[8] All the quotations of *Four Quartets* are from *The Poems of T.S. Eliot. Volume I,* ed. by Christopher Ricks and Jim McCue. London: Faber&Faber, 2015. The abbreviation stands for "BN" – "Burnt Norton", "EA" – "East Coker", "DS" – "The Dry Salvages", and "LG" – "Little Gidding". A Roman number following the abbreviation signifies the part, and an Arabic one – the line corresponding the given quotation.

The first two lines are particularly difficult for those looking for one precise translation. Grover Smith in *T.S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays: A Study in Sources and Meaning*, introduces two possible interpretations of Heraclitus's words: 1) "Though the law of things is universal in scope, the average man makes up the rules for himself", and 2) "Though the Word governs everything, most people trust in their own wisdom" (255). Although the two translations differ, they both suggest that humans live in their own worlds despite there being only one world. The second epigraph is more direct: "the way up and the way down are one and the same" (Smith, 256).

While Akhmatova's link to Heraclitus is tenuous, his philosophy is one of the cornerstones of the *Quartets*. It is known that Nikolai Gumilev, Akhmatova's first husband, was influenced by Heraclitus's ideas, which is particularly noticeable in his collection of poems *The Pyre*[9], published in 1918. One can assume that Akhmatova would know Heraclitus's work at least through Gumilev's poems and probably through her own extensive reading. Furthermore, *Poem Without a Hero* is reminiscent of Heraclitus's postulates, especially his idea of the unity of opposites.

On the other hand, almost every Eliotian scholar mentions the parallel between Heraclitus and the poet, for example, Carl Adolf Bodelsen (*T.S. Eliot's Four Quartets*, 12), Nancy K. Gish (*Time in the Poetry of T.S. Eliot*, 97), Morris Weitz ("T.S. Eliot: Time as a Mode of Salvation", 138), and Helen Gardner (*The Art of T.S. Eliot*, 57) all show that Heraclitus influenced Eliot throughout his creative career. In *The Making of T.S. Eliot*, Joseph Maddrey maintains that Eliot

[9] In Russian: Костер

was introduced to Heraclitus's philosophy during his Harvard years as he was taking George Herbert Palmer's course on the history of philosophy and George Santayana's philosophy of history (25). Manju Jain verifies this fact indicating that Eliot "took down the opinions of various scholars on Heraclitus from G.T.W. Patrick's *Heraclitus of Ephesus* (1889)" (*T.S. Eliot and American Philosophy*, 198).

In 1960, Eliot wrote to Dr Nicola Coppola: "I was certainly in my youth very much influenced by Herakleitos, and I think that has been a permanent one. The quotations at the beginning of *Burnt Norton* are a tribute to my debt to this great philosopher" (*The Poems of T.S. Eliot,* 907). Eliot does not translate what he saw in the given lines and instead leaves the epigraphs open for interpretation. Both quotations state one idea seen from two different aspects, which is the wholeness of the world, no matter how disjointed and incoherent it may seem. Heraclitus's first phrase suggests the unity of all being and human unwillingness (if not incapacity) to accept thus reality. The second assertion at first glance looks like a paradox; however, the interconnectedness of the world should suggest the unity of opposites. Their status as an introduction to *Four Quartets* is not unidimensional either. They propose the main theme of the following text, which shall be unified by the view of the world as an integral entity. They are also an invitation to see the poem as one unity, despite its fragmentary nature.

3.2.4 "Deus conservat omnia"

Akhmatova's epigraph to the *Poem* serves a similar goal that Eliot's. She chooses Latin "Deus conservat omnia" as an introduction to the poetic lines that we as

readers are about to live, which stands for "God looks after everything" (as translated in Hemschemeyer's version). Ushakova affirms that "Deus conservat omnia" "rings out as a fitting epigraph to the art of two of the 20th century's greatest poets", namely, Eliot and Akhmatova ("A Word Which is not Mine", 77).

Akhmatova uses a motto on the coat of arms of Fountain House, where she had lived and had the famous meeting with her Guest from the Future, Sir Isaiah Berlin, rather than philosophical statements that would imply a profound reflection linked to rational thought. Thus, it can be said that the eternal wisdom of the motto of the Fountain House is also something very personal to the poet, as the Latin words from the past were Akhmatova's present and are, perhaps, the future of the poem. Like the quotations preceding Eliot's *Quartets,* the Latin motto implies some divine order superior to all of us, and also, the "everythingness" of the world, where no thing becomes simply nothing but everything is eternally present. Alternatively, "Deus conservat omnia" is reminiscent of prayer or hope that the *Poem* will remain in a world that was so unwelcoming to Akhmatova.

Both Akhmatova's and Eliot's epigraphs make references to an antique world and are written in a forgotten language no longer spoken, which survives in only half wiped away symbols and writings. Despite being forgotten in modern times, those symbols and writings prove themselves only stronger over the course of history, for they are a foundation of modern Western civilisation, and as such, they are always present. Besides, being reduced to the classroom and academic use, Old Greek and Latin have become a secret language for the "chosen ones" since the ability to read them is a proof of one's possession of certain knowledge. We are to go, like classical heroes, through the process of initiation in order to start our

odyssey through *Four Quartets* and *Poem Without a Hero*. The Greek and Latin historicisms weave the lyrics together not only through their meaning but also as a subtle, re-appearing reference in the poems.

3.3 Space

An important structural difference between the poems lies in their location. Eliot's poem offers its readers an intercontinental journey between England and the USA, while *Poem Without a Hero* is entirely set in one place, the Fountain House.

3.3.1 The Fountain House

The Fountain House, also known as Fontanka, was Akhmatova's refuge for most of her life. She moved there in 1921, for a few years sharing a flat with the composer Arthur Lurye (1892-1966) and Sudeikina. Her second stay at the Fontanka was much longer, about thirty years, in the flat belonging to Ivan Punin, whose wife and daughter also lived there. The original name of the building is Sheremetev Palace; it was constructed in 1712 for Field-Marshal Boris Sheremetev ("The Museum of Music in the Sheremetev Palace"). The title "Fountain House" was attributed to it due to numerous fountains in its grounds. Describing Punin's flat, Feinstein notes that it "was the kind people of the upper classes had lived in before the Revolution" (*Anna of All the Russias*, 121). Today this flat serves as Anna Akhmatova Literary and Memorial Museum, in which everything is reconstructed as it was when she occupied it.

As the setting for the *Poem,* the Fontanka is almost the only constant element in the universe of the text, although in each part, the house is set in a different date and time. "In Place of Foreword" takes place the night of December 27, 1940. In "The Year Nineteen Thirteen", the time is "New Year's Eve", and later in the text, we find the year, 1941. The next section, "The Obverse", indicates the date as January 5, in the same year 1941. Lastly, "The Epilogue" takes place on June 24, 1942, coinciding with a white night. Although it took Akhmatova more than twenty years to write the poem, its lyrical timeline remains within two years.

The Fountain House thus embodies Heraclitus's flux. First the house appears as an essential part of the epigraph of the *Poem* as the motto. The house then is found throughout the text as "The Fountain Grotto"[10] in "Across the Landing. Interlude"; it is the setting for "Part Two"; and it is a reference in the very first line of the last part of the poem, "Epilogue". Akhmatova thereby creates another double apart from Olga Glebova-Sudeikina and herself, because the Fountain House acts, firstly, as the background of the text, which is clearly stated in the remarks of some unknown director that precede all the parts, and, secondly, as the fabric of the text. The house, thus, is both a silent witness and an active participant of the poem.

As a contributor to the *Poem,* the Fountain House goes through certain metamorphoses. In his commentary on the *Poem*, Nayman observes that its action develops mainly at night (*Remembering Anna Akhmatova,* 341). In "In Place of Foreword" and "The Year Nineteen Thirteen", Akhmatova indicates this herself.

[10] In Russian: "Фонтанный грот" (327).

The feeling of the night, its darkness and elusiveness is particularly evident in "The Year Nineteen Thirteen" as the Hoffman-like masquerade unfolds before the poetic persona's eyes. "Obverse" is more ambiguous given the absence of any direct indication. Its lines, though, also prove Nayman right as the introductory remarks mention "the ghost of a snow-covered maple" (566)[11], evoking a dark silhouette of the tree at night. The half-dreamy content of the verse supports this view, as the opening of the fifth stanza "And in my dream it seemed"[12] (567) puts the rest of the text into this constant wondering: is the poetic persona dreaming of what they are depicting or is it real? As if inspired by one of her favourite writers, Franz Kafka (1883-1924), Akhmatova blurs the lines between fantasy and reality, breaking the boundaries of what actually happens and what occurs potentially.

A notable exception from the night set is the last part, "Epilogue". The remarks tell us that this time we witness one of the white nights, for which Saint-Petersburg is well-known. So, it is in between an actual night, dark and full of the unknown, and a bright day, when everything is clear. Thus, the white night sets a more hopeful background in comparison to the darkness of the nights in "The year Nineteen Thirteen" and "the Obverse" but as Akhmatova does not dare to speak of hope openly, "the Epilogue" is still set at night, even if it is white.

What is more, the last part of the *Poem* depicts a broad landscape, for the only time in the verse. The poetic persona goes beyond the walls of the Fountain House

[11] In Russian: "призрак оснеженного клена" (335)

[12] In Russian: "А во сне мне казалось" (336)

as if flying over common graves, in which so many of her friends are buried; she flies over New York, to where some others ran fleeing Russia; and over "forests full of the enemy" (575) in some lucky escape, which Akhmatova never experienced in reality. Finally, the flight ends in the Eastern part of Russia, in the Ural Mountains, where endless Siberia starts:

> And opening before me was the road
> Down which so many have trod,
> Down which my son was led,
> And the funeral procession was long
> Amidst the festive and crystal
> Silence of the Siberian land.
> Seized by mortal fear
> Of what had turned to dust
> And recognizing the hour of vengeance,
> Lowering her dry eyes
> And wringing her hands, Russia
> Fled before me to the east.[13] (576)

The symbolism of the image lies, first, in choosing the road, associated with new beginnings and discoveries, as the ending of the triptych. The nature of the road in question is also ambivalent; on the one hand, it is the route of tears and suffering, tortures and oppression, which leads to Siberia, the land almost synonymous with prison for the "unwanted elements" of a Russian (or Soviet)

[13] In Russian: И открылась мне та дорога,
По которой ушло так много,
По которой сына везли.
И был долог путь погребальный
Средь торжественной и хрустальной
Тишины Сибирской Земли.
От того, что сделалось прахом,
Обуянная смертным страхом
И отмщения зная срок,
Опустивши глаза сухие
И ломая руки, Россия
Предо мною шла на восток (344)

society. On the other hand, the east is where the sun rises, bringing a new day and a new hope and filling the world with warmth and light. Furthermore, in *Eliot's The Waste Land* the iconic image of the fall of western civilisation is that of the victims of the Bolshevik revolution "the hooded hordes swarming / over endless plains, stumbling in cracked earth / Ringed by the flat horizon only" (*The Poems of T.S. Eliot*, 69). Those lost exiles predicted by Dostoyevsky in *The Brothers Karamazov* is the logical outgrowth of the nihilistic ideological body of belief.

Does Russia's going to the east signify its imprisonment until "the hour of vengeance"? Or does it imply hope for the better future for Akhmatova's home country? I argue that as before, the poet avoids straightforwardness. Considering that in general her tone in the *Poem* is more pessimistic than Eliot's in the *Quartets*, the first suggestion is more plausible, especially in such a dark context as that which Akhmatova depicts for the procession. The east appears as a symbolic space alien to western humanistic values. East and west are symbolic places. The west is associated with humanistic ideals since the Renaissance, and the east is seen as a denial of these democratic values. However, understanding the east as hope is not the only nuance that prevents us from perceiving a tragic finale in the last words of the *Poem*. Despite the horrors that have led to the procession and that still follow it, its route lies "amidst the festive and crystal / Silence of the Siberian land". Nature in its grandeur and beauty here is put side by side with human self-torture and destruction. The "crystal" clear pureness of Siberia opposes "what had turned to dust" by human efforts to deny history and memory as essential in mapping out one's destination. Siberia stands as a reminder that the prison Russia finds itself in

is self-made and could be torn down in the same way it was built originally, through history.

The road at the end of "Epilogue" is an intersection of spaces, routes and roads, but also times. The description portrays the poetic persona on that road. Standing there, she sees her past and that of the whole nation ("down which my son was led") as well as the future, for the procession is moving towards the east. The picture looks unreal, like a prophetic vision, since instead of people the poet sees a personified Russia taking this route. To add to the symbolism of the vision, Siberian landscapes are depicted as the intrusion of eternity – calm, pure, and true – into the timespan of human existence, perpetuating its own agony.

Considering Akhmatova's lack of interaction with Hegel's work, it is quite surprising to see her finish the poem with the depiction that illustrates his view on the East as our dark past that should be overcome. Although there is no evidence that Akhmatova read Hegel, he had a remarkable influence on nineteenth-century Russia. For instance, Alexander Pushkin, who is considered the greatest Russian poet and was an inexhaustible source of inspiration for Akhmatova, read extensively on German idealism and notably Hegel. Through the work of Pushkin and the interest that Russian intellectuals of that time had in German philosophy, Hegelian dialectics was broadly introduced to Russian thought. It is therefore likely that Akhmatova would be acquainted with Hegel's ideas too.

One of Hegel's most influential works is *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807), an introductory course into the philosophy of spirit, or mind. Hegel argues that time is more prominent than any science can express, as they perceive time only formally

and relate to time's true characteristics merely externally. For Hegel, it is essential to admit the spiritual constitution of time. Thus, time does not simply measure our human existence but also appoints the development of Spirit: "Only the totality of Spirit is in Time and the 'shapes', which are 'shapes' of the totality of Spirit, display themselves in a temporal succession" (*The Phenomenology of Spirit*, 413).

Hegel perceives history in the same way as all existence: it is driven by the Absolute Spirit and is in a constant state of progress. Hegel, unlike many other philosophers of idealism, focuses on the world rather than national history, for he believes nations outstrip borders imposed by nature. World history is presented as evidence of universal reason that guides the world's being. The development of history, according to Hegel, is a western-oriented process, for it has been moving from East towards West and would find its end in Europe. The foundation for this belief was in seeing Christian society as the first to accept the freedom of all people. Hence, the Spirit has developed from despotic civilisations of the East to the much more open and free European society.

In parallel with Hegel's belief, Akhmatova felt that moving to the east, her nation was taking another step back under the rule of short-sighted and power-hungry governors. As if bowing before the inevitable judgement of time, Akhmatova's poetic persona embraces the destiny of her country, which instead of moving forward, to a free society of the West, is heading back to its dark and violent Easternness. The sad finale is plainly obvious to any Russian or anyone well-familiar with this country, as its division between West and East, both

geographically and mentally, has been a constant source of debate. This rift has come to define modern Russian identity.

3.3.3 Inter-spatial Journey of *Four Quartets*

As the title of the poem suggests, *Four Quartets* consists of four parts. Eliot repeatedly affirmed the connection between his poem and chamber music, most frequently referring to Beethoven's string quartets. For instance, this is confirmed by one of the letters sent by Eliot's secretary to J. Shepherd in 1961: "the form had originally been suggested to him by musical quartets... and he had particularly in mind the late quartets of Beethoven" (*The Poems of T.S. Eliot,* 894). Eliot also often addressed the relation between poetry and music, for example, in the essay "The Music of Poetry" (1942), and more than once praised Beethoven's talent to get beyond music, the same as Eliot aimed at getting beyond poetry. This goal was fulfilled in *Four Quartets.*

The first quartet, "Burnt Norton" is linked to an encounter with Emily Hale (1891-1961) in a then abandoned mansion called Burnt Norton, in 1934. For Moody, it "memorialises a house burnt down, giving a ghostly presence to what has been behind the modern garden and house" (*T.S. Eliot: The Poet,* 185). The house was constructed for Sir William Keyt, only to be set on fire by him in 1741, when after a week of drinking he immolated himself in the fire. However, Eliot was unaware of this story, although he admitted that he had "found some obscure attraction in the name" (*The Poems of T.S. Eliot,* 903). After the accident, the house

was demolished, and what was formerly known as Norton House became Burnt Norton. It later became the property of the Earls of Harrowby, who expanded the rose garden and built a swimming pool.

It was Hale's aunt who initially invited Eliot to the property in the Cotswolds, which she and her husband owned. The figure of Emily Hale was no less critical for Eliot than the memory of her first husband, Nikolai Gumilev for Akhmatova. Although never more than friends, Eliot and Hale had a very close relationship. Such scholars as Lyndall Gordon, Christopher Ricks, Carl Adolf Bodelsen, and Helen Gardner agree that in the quartets Eliot represents the life he never had the chance to share with Hale as the dimension of "what might have been" (Gordon 334, Ricks 2005, Bodelsen 58, Gardner 31, Ricks 903).

Thus, the first movement of the opening quartet arose from a meditation on personal and, consequently, world history. From the start, Eliot connects all history to the past and to that which never took place yet remains in the fabric of time, for time absorbs it all. Like Akhmatova, he puts certain temporal markers in his text in order to historicise it, though much less directly. She straightforwardly includes the dates of creation of her works, sometimes at the end of a fragment, at others defining the exact time span in the poems. Eliot, on the other hand, chooses places as a historiographic resource.

The second quartet, "East Coker", is related to England too, yet had a more direct connection to the poet in another time. It is named after a village in Somerset, from which Thomas Elyot, the founder of the American line of the poet's family, emigrated in 1667. This is also where Eliot was buried.

The third part brings us to Eliot's native land, the USA, and is titled "The Dry Salvages". It introduces the land familiar to the poet as a young boy. The name refers to a group of rocks close to New England's Cape Ann. Here Eliot's father had a house, and young Thomas used to spend summer holidays there.

The last quartet is again set in England, this time in a remote village, Little Gidding. The location has no direct connection to Eliot's past. However, Helen Gardner in *The Composition of Four Quartets* suggests that the connection may lie in the Eliots' library, where there was a copy of *John Inglesant* by Joseph Henry Shorthouse, an 1881 novel dedicated to the Christian community that was founded in Little Gidding by Nicholas Ferrar (1592-1637) in 1626. Ricks in his commentary on the poem notes that Eliot visited the village in 1936; he read a play about its Christian community and a doctoral thesis by Bernard Blackstone, who saw the figure of Nicholas Ferrar as "the most original genius in the church during the vital period of her post-Reformation history" (*The Poems of T.S. Eliot,* 990).

Following the verse, Eliot's readers find themselves looking at what might have been in an English village, Burnt Norton, only to be transported to another small English town, East Coker, which became the end of the English Eliots and the start of the American Eliots, where the scene moves to America, and finally, back to England and Little Gidding, the quintessence of history, especially a spiritual history and the history of Christianity, which Eliot embraced when he converted to Anglicanism in 1927. Hence, the geographical journey between the two countries that the poet called home turns out to be a spiritual voyage closely related to both his personal history and history in general.

Both Eliot and Akhmatova echo Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time* (1927) when he affirms that Being is ubiquitous which is impossible to define and impossible to neglect. Being manifests itself everywhere, as Heidegger asserts: "'being-in-the-world' stands for a unified phenomenon" (*Being and Time*, 49). He goes on to advise his readers to perceive the concept of "being-in-the-world" as a whole and attributes it to Da-sein (human existence) as an essential element. Therefore, apart from linking together time and knowledge, he also ties them to space and calls it "existential spatiality" (52).

This concept is relevant to *Poem Without a Hero* and *Four Quartets*. Time is the leitmotif of the two poems, established on lexical, metaphorical, and structural levels. Yet space is also prominent in the texts. In Eliot's case, space is the opening of all four parts, as each is titled with the name of a carefully chosen geographical location. Akhmatova's titles vary from numbers, "The Year Nineteen Thirteen", to a self-explicit "Epilogue"; however, every section starts with its positioning spatially, namely, in the Fountain House. The house retains its name, but it is not the same place for as the narrator marks a different date for each of the poem's parts, the space also changes.

Both poets, being mainly preoccupied with the notion of time, make a clear connection of time to space, blurring the boundaries between the two and so establishing Heidegger-like "existential spatiality". The rose-garden, the Fountain House, the space between river and sea, the Soviet prisons, almost all the spatial images that Eliot and Akhmatova evoke in their poems become clusters of various time dimensions that find the lyrical personae on the brink of a life-defining moment.

3.4 The Four Parts of *Four Quartets*

Numerous theories explain the metastructure of *Four Quartets*. As Denis Donoghue rightly puts it in *Words Alone: The Poet T.S. Eliot*: "Most of the cruxes in Eliot's poems have been elucidated, the allusions explained. But his ways with language remain as bizarre as Mallarme's" (x-xi). Unsurprisingly, the works of such Eliotian scholars as Stephen Spender's *Eliot*, Bernard Bergonzi's *T.S. Eliot*, Helen Gardner's *The Art of T.S. Eliot*, Ronald Schuchard's *Eliot's Dark Angel*, among others, allow me to conclude that there is general agreement regarding the structure of the *Quartets*, which is consistent throughout the text, so every movement, composed of five sections, serves a particular aim and does so in all the quartets equally.

Spender is convinced that the first movement is an introduction and statement; the second is "a sustained meditative passage further developing the thought"; the third is an illustration of a journey or pilgrimage of the theme of exploration; the fourth is a lyric; and last but not least, the fifth is "a summary of the whole and a return to the theme" (*Eliot*, 155).

Bergonzi agrees with Spender's suggestion that there is a recurrent system behind the movements, but regarding the goal of each of them he finds more suitable an analysis suggested by Christian Karlson Stead and quotes it as follows:

1. The movement of time, in which brief moments of eternity are caught.
2. Worldly experience, leading only to dissatisfaction.
3. Purgation in the world, divesting the soul of the love of created things
4. A lyrical prayer for, or affirmation of the need of Intercession.

> 5. The problems of attaining artistic wholeness which become analogues for, and merge into, the problems of achieving spiritual health."(*T.S. Eliot,* 164)

In his view, this analysis can be applied as to the *Quartets* and to *The Waste Land*, which brings Bergonzi to the conclusion that Eliot must have used his earlier poem as a template (*T.S. Eliot,* 165).

According to Moody in *Thomas Stearns Eliot. Poet*, these movements establish a kind of analogy to one of the cornerstones of the poem, meaning "way up is way down". As such, the first movement is situated on a lower level rising to Movement II, which descends to the third, picking up again at Movement IV and, finally, goes down to the last section (197).

Gish focuses on the philosophical element of the movements, considering the poems as "meditations" that "move from speculation to musing to argument to recollecting the fleeting moment of vision", and finally, to "a movement towards understanding" (*Time in the Poetry of T.S. Eliot,* 94).

In his commentary *T.S. Eliot's Four Quartets*, Bodelsen provides readers with a scrupulous description of the system behind the movements:

> Movement I introduces a topic while falling into two or three parts;
> Movement II has two subdivisions and contains philosophic reflections on the theme;
> Movement III also falls into two parts, combining a symbolic passage, a description of "the downward way" to release from the bondage of time through mystical experience;
> Movement IV is a lyrical poem;
> Movement V falls into two parts two, and in three quartets (namely, "Burnt Norton", "East Coker", and "Little Gidding") it treats the problem of art (30-31).

Donoghue's *Words Alone: The Poet T.S. Eliot* echoes some of the aspects reflected in the above analyses of the movements of the *Quartets*:

> Movement I – introduction of a theme
> Movement II – a statement of the true condition, set off against the preoccupations that prevent its recognition
> Movement III – a statement of our time-ridden condition
> Movement IV – a lyric of purgation
> Movement V – a meditation on the redemption of Time (230-238).

It is evident that there are both parallels and dissimilarities between the views. One common element for all is the perspective on the first movement as an overture, which establishes the theme explored in a given quartet.

Furthermore, Eliot pointed out himself the link between the four parts of his poem and four basic elements. In the interview with *Granite Review*, Eliot said that he associated the quartets "with the four elements: air, earth, water and fire, in that order". Since this parallel was suggested by the poet, all the above-mentioned studies also refer to it.

3.5 The Three Parts of *Poem Without a Hero*

The structure of *Four Quartets* is partly parallel to that of the *Poem*. Its three parts are "The Year Nineteen Thirteen", "The Other Side of the Coin" ("Obverse" in Donald Michael Thomas's 1985 translation is perhaps more suitable), and "Epilogue". While Akhmatova does not specify a location in the title of the fragment, in the introductory remarks to every part, she clearly establishes the Fountain house as the chosen location. Yet this is not the same house, because

although identical geographically in all three parts, it moves in time; the Fountain house from "The Year Nineteen Thirteen" belongs to the year 1940, the one in "The Other Side of the Coin" is located in 1941, and in "Epilogue" — in 1942.

The main body of *Poem Without a Hero* has a considerably less organised structure. The three parts of the *Poem* are all written in different styles and tones. Svetlana Kovalenko suggests that the poem is two halves of a "drawbridge" with an "arch" between them. (*Анна Ахматова,* 251-252). The first "half of the bridge", "Year Nineteen Thirteen", is historical epos dedicated to the old world on the brink of its annihilation. The "arch", "Obverse", connects the past depicted in the first fragment with the last, "Epilogue". In it, Akhmatova alongside her fellow countrymen is to go through a new historical trial, World War II. Kovalenko also highlights the relevance of the trial division in the poem. Akhmatova calls her poem "a triptych" and not only divides the body into three parts but also precedes them with three dedications. Kovalenko claims that by insisting on the three-fold nature of *Poem Without a Hero*, Akhmatova aimed at connecting the past, present, and future (255). What is more, such structure links Akhmatova to Dante's *Divine Comedy* and references the Christian trinity.

Julia Platonova, in her article "On the Peculiarities of the Plot Structure of *Poem Without a Hero* by Anna Akhmatova", defines the poem as "a beam of possibilities" (323). Platonova overlooks the structure imposed by Akhmatova and instead, focuses on the poem as embracing three different poetical works, namely, an epic lyrical poem, a tale about Saint Petersburg, and a short lyrical poem.

Kees Verheul views the poem as cyclical, in which the development happens not from beginning to end but through the transformations and expansions of key elements that reappear throughout the text (*The Theme of Time in the Poetry of Anna Akhmatova, 387*). Such a view bears a striking resemblance to *Four Quartets*, which is also built around principal themes that widen from quartet to quartet.

* * *

To draw a conclusion on the general structure of the two poems, for both Eliot and Akhmatova, it is important to mark the meridians and parallels of the journey that their readers are taking. The precise marks are established in terms of geography and history. Such precision follows the idea that initially sparked the two poetic pieces, namely the wholeness of our existence, and the intrinsic unity of its parts.

The repeated movement through all epochs and histories, personal or religious, establishes the lyrical pattern – the interconnectedness of time, which perpetually interacts with all its elements. The poems, in uniting space and time, confirm the connection which is well known to scientists but challenging to the individual. The oneness of the world is reflected both at the level of structure and as the thematic layer of *Poem Without a Hero* and *Four Quartets.* This unified nature of the universe is particularly evident in time as depicted in the poems.

Chapter 4

Change and Time

Time means foremost movement and change and is often seen as an instrument that assesses change. Time inseparably connected to the ongoing fluctuation of the world and all its elements, is the first layer of temporality found in *Poem Without a Hero* and *Four Quartets*.

By addressing the transformational power of time, the poems reflect on the Heraclitian notion of flux and constant change of all elements. Heraclitus created a philosophical system based on the belief that "all things are in the state of flux". The world started with fire as it developed due to constant changes and transformations, fire turned into water, water – into earth, and so on. Therefore, the very beginning of the world lies in its evolution, and that change is ceaseless.

The use of time as measurement for change is consonant with Aristotle's philosophy. Eliot was introduced to it at Harvard, in George Palmer's course of Ancient Philosophy (Jain *T.S. Eliot and American Philosophy,* 62). Freed and Maddrey agree on the significance of Aristotle for Eliot's development as a thinker. Particularly, in *The Sacred Wood*, Eliot describes Aristotle as "an eternal example of intelligence itself swiftly operating the analysis of sensation to the point of principle and definition" (11).

Aristotle's impact on Akhmatova is more an assumption, though logical taking into account her upbringing, in that she characterised herself as "half-Greek, half-barbarian" (Akhmatova *The Complete Poems,* 38-39). Besides, she presented

Anatoly Nayman with Isaiah Berlin's essay, *The Hedgehog and the Fox,* which was partially dedicated to Aristotle. In this essay, Berlin light-heartedly suggests dividing all thinkers into those who perceive the world through one particular idea (hedgehogs) and those who cannot reduce the reality to a single idea (foxes). Aristotle is used as an example of a fox (*The Hedgehog and the Fox: An Essay on Tolstoy's View of History*, 2).

Aristotle's views on time are most explicitly discussed in *Physics*. This text dedicated to what he classified as "practical sciences" united his views on such foundations of existence as physics and biology. Defining time on this level, he affirms: "Time is a measure of motion and of being moved. Since time is a measure of motion, it will be the measure of rest too – indirectly" (*Basic Works*, 294-295). Thus, time is a plain number for the duration of an action. There is no verification of the existence of time on its own, for any effect of time on things cannot be seen; whatever change occurs "with time" results from other physical forces. Therefore, the only way to witness time is in motion.

4.1 "The fortress clock has struck" vs "Near the ending of interminable night": Chronicling Changes

Time as a harbinger of change is widely presented in *Poem Without a Hero* and *Four Quartets*. Eliot and Akhmatova address such vision of time using date- and location-keeping. The constant binding of the allusive images of the poems to a precise date and space keep the readers grounded and fully aware of the concrete reality of the poems.

In the case of Akhmatova's *Poem,* besides the very specific mentions of dates, which form a sort of stage directions before each chapter, the text has plenty of references to seasons, precise days, and hours. Their common aim is to mark a turn in the poet's destiny. For instance, in "The Year Nineteen Thirteen", "the fortress clock has struck" (115) signals both the New Year 1941, since the section starts with a masquerade on New Year's Eve, as well as "the point of no return", as 1941 is the year when World War II affected the Soviet Union, followed by a new upsurge of Stalinist repressions. In *Poem Without a Hero,* time is broadly presented as a yardstick of passing time; yet, it is inseparable from the notion of change, which engenders some crucial transformations for Akhmatova, the country, and the epoch.

Eliot, on the other hand, specifies the place of each quartet by naming a location important to him but he does not mark any time limits for the sections of the poem. Throughout *Four Quartets*, however, we come across a number of time-markers: "summer in the tree" (BN II. 9, 180), "on a summer midnight" (EC I. 25, 184), "midwinter spring is its own season (LG I. 1, 201)", to name some. Rather than the precise dates of *Poem Without a Hero*, they are a vague time frame. It could be any summer, any midwinter, in any country and any century. This places the poem in a less specific context than Akhmatova's work. Even though both poets believed that their personal experience had to be objectified in order to become true poetry, Eliot writes in a much more general and less documentary mode.

A striking example of Eliot's vagueness in time references is found in "Little Gidding": "In the uncertain hour before the morning / Near the ending of interminable night" (LG II. 25-26, 203). Although he refers to a specific time period, when bombs were falling on London during World War II, his phrasing

encapsulates uncertainty, and thus time becomes an indefinable unity: an unknown hour of an unknown morning of an unknown day in an unknown season of an unknown time and era. The controversy between "the ending" and "interminable night" gives the impression that Eliot is speaking about the end of days, the end of mankind. The quoted lines fall into the category of time that is designed to measure movement and therefore, life, but they also subvert this idea by referring to an abstract hour, creating a motionless, still life.

4.2 "Terrible festival of dead leaves" and "The book never opened": The Inevitability of Change

In *Poem Without a Hero* and *Four Quartets,* the theme of the inevitability of change goes together with the exploration of time and its implications. The understanding of time as the cause of change gains relevance when Eliot and Akhmatova use change as a signifier of the unavoidable. Their fatalism is far from despairing as their poetic voices call for a more general view, in which it becomes clear that change is both inevitable and necessary.

Akhmatova advocates the belief that everything is inter-related, and thus a change of one element in our living will manifest itself in the consequential changes all across the system. An illustration of that belief is found in the first chapter of "The Year Nineteen Thirteen":

> As the future ripens in the past,
> So the past rots in the future –

A terrible festival of dead leaves[1] (552)

Akhmatova's "A terrible festival of dead leaves" turns the fragment that starts as a philosophical and seemingly impartial general statement into a vivid reminder of our insignificance, since we all end up as leafage. Importantly, in the original, it is not "leaves" but "leafage", which implies a collective perspective on human destiny, in which we all participate.

Akhmatova's image of the fallen leaves is analogous with Eliot's philosophical meditation on time as enchainment in "Burnt Norton"*:*

> Time present and time past
> Are both perhaps present in time future
> And time future contained in time past.
> If all time is eternally present
> All time is unredeemable (BN I. 1-5, 179).

However, even though the past, the present, and the future are closely linked, they are still not one, as in Eliot's poem. It seems that there are two dimensions of time, the eternal time and the human. On the one hand, it is a linear sequence, for the past smoulders in the future and defines it, as the future grows from the past. Seen so, time appears a vortex of deaths and losses and thus lacks any meaning or logic. On the other hand, this linearity is outward only, for Eliot links past, present, and future into one inter-related continuum. Whether you choose to see time linear or connected, though, the change is inescapable.

[1] In Russian: Как в прошедшем грядущее зреет,
Так в грядущем прошлое тлеет –
Страшный праздник мертвой листвы. (324)

As a change bearer, time is reflected differently in the *Poem* and *Quartets*. For Eliot, change, although inescapable, is endowed with the power of transformation and hence, the possibility of shaping the future and influencing the whole system of time. Akhmatova's conclusion suggests a tragic view on the inevitability of change as everything natural is bound to die, despite the natural inter-connection of time within itself (the process of ripening and rotting); and although dead leaves will become fertile soil, Akhmatova's image of numerous, fallen, powerless"dead leaves" does not provide hope or even consolation. On the contrary, it underlines the destructiveness of continuous change.

Change as an ongoing and integral force is underlined in Heraclitus's philosophy, in which you cannot step twice into the same river. Either the "you" will have changed by the time of entering the waters of the river for the second time, or the river itself will have become changed by its constant flow. Nothing ever rests, everything is in permanent movement, including human beings.

Aristotle is in agreement with Heraclitus when he claims: "the nature of a thing is a beginning, and so is the element of a thing, and thought and will, and essence, and the final cause – for the good and the beautiful are the beginning both of the knowledge and of the movement of many things" (*The Basic Works*, 752). Aristotle argues that goodness and beauty are the origins of our knowledge and motion. However, this aspect contains a contradiction, for what Aristotle calls the beginning is also a way to the end, which is the natural course of things in the world. No matter how poetic and good the reason for something coming into existence may be all stages of existence, are one; hence, "nature", "element", "thought",

"will", "essence", "final cause" are all linked together in one sentence, and in one being.

Preceding a public reading of "The Dry Salvages", Eliot affirmed that "this poem ... ends where I and my wife expect to end, at the parish church of a tiny village in Sommerset" ("The Influence of Landscape upon the Poet", 422). These are the lines to which Eliot refers:

> We, content at the last
> If our temporal reversion nourish
> (Not too far from the yew-tree)
> The life of significant soil. (DS V. 47-50, 200)

In parallel with the "ripening" and "rotting" of time in the *Poem*, "The Dry Salvages" implies the naturalness of time passing. But Eliot's nature, unlike Akhmatova's, is endowed with meaning and life. The sterility of *The Waste Land* is passed, Eliot in *Four Quartets* is closer to regeneration. Even though human "nourish" is only temporal, it will continue within the soil of eternity.

In "The Dry Salvages", we find various reflections on the impossibility of avoiding change while remaining enchained in time:

> I sometimes wonder if that is what Krishna meant —
> Among other things — or one way of putting the same thing:
> That the future is a faded song, a Royal Rose or a lavender spray
> Of wistful regret for those who are not yet here to regret,
> Pressed between yellow leaves of a book that has never been opened.
> (DS III. 1-5, 197)

Unlike the opening lines of "Burnt Norton", "Time present and time passed", meditative and distanced, the reference to "yellow leaves of a book that has neve rbeen opened" in this passage from "The Dry Salvages" is more emotionally charged and more in tune with Akhmatova's image of the "terrible festival of dead

leaves" (552). Like hers, they suggest the inexorable nature of time and existence. Eliot, despite the "faded song" and repeated "regret", leaves us with an unopened book, and although such a book at first looks like a symbol of human inability to grasp that which is superior to us, it also gives us some hope. There is no way to bring "dead leaves" back to life but after all, "a book that has never been opened" may become "a book that has been opened", if one is to reach out for it.

In this passage of "The Dry Salvages" Eliot makes a reference to the dialogue between Krishna, the Hindu God, and Arjuna, his warrior-disciple, which is described in the *Bhagavad-Gita*. Arjuna falls into dejection and asks Krishna whether it is worth in an apocalyptic war in which the warring factions are his kin and in which both will be destoyed, a situation similar to that of World War II. Krishna advises him "do not think of the fruit of action / Fare forwrard" (DS III. 38-39, 198). Krishna tells him to fight since the things have to be done not as a means to an end but as an end in themselves. Only actions performed in the name of ethical values and not as means to an end will "fractify in the lives of others" (DS III. 37, 198)). As John Xiros Cooper affirms in *The Cambridge Introduction to T.S. Eliot*: "We must be *in* the world but not *of* it" (104). In this way, "the life of the significant soil" (DS V. 50, 200) is a life that allows one to be redeemed from the linearity of time.

4.3 "Time the destroyer is time the preserver": Two Faces of Change

Coinciding with the theme of time and change, there is also a question if a change is to transform that which is being altered or to remove it. Aristotle explores one

line of the argument when he suggests a fatalistic view on time: "time is by its nature the cause rather of decay, since it is the number of change, and change removes it all" (*The Basic Works*, 295). Time is a natural, uncontrollable power destined to annihilate everything that comes in its way; a power over which nothing and nobody can have authority. Here, he proposes an image of time as destroyer. Time side by side with motion causes modification. Contrary to what we may suggest, change in Aristotle's discourse differs from transformation, for the latter could be interpreted as a positive shift. However, he shows that the final result of change caused by time is a removal that harbours the end.

Eliot and Akhmatova take different stands on time as a destroyer or a re-builder. When for Akhmatova time dismantles the past and starts something new only in order eventually to end it, for Eliot the emphasis falls on "change" rather than "removal".

While "change" and "removal" are two stages of the same process, Eliot highlights more the transformational element of time rather than the destructive one: "Time and the bell have buried the day, / The black cloud carries the sun away" (BN IV. 1-2, 183). Although these lines sound pessimistic (motifs of burial and dark clouds), at the same time they read as if it were generally accepted for this day to be like that because tomorrow there will be a new day. This definite article before "day" appears to signify that here we read about only one particular day, and it will not affect the rest. Even when Eliot addresses the subversive nature of time, he still links it to a more harmonious element of it as well: "Time the destroyer is time the preserver" (DS II. 67, 196). For him, whenever time destroys, it also builds.

Eliot points out what comes after the removal, encouraging readers to remember the past while being open and perceptive to the new. Age and experience might teach us some wisdom and how to read into history and the past, and, therefore, the past will stop being a simple recollection of dates and occurrences from before, and one may be capable of seeing a different dimension of time. Instead of sticking to Euclidean geometry, we will discover solid geometry and new angles, perspectives, and facets of reality.

Probably, one of the best-known lines of *Four Quartets* is also related to the ambivalence of time and change and their transformational power. This line opens the second part, "East Coker": "In my beginning is my end" (EC I. 1, 185). This statement becomes a refrain, repeated and rephrased throughout all parts; "East Coker" ends with its variation as well: "In my end is my beginning" (EC V. 38, 192). The end becomes a new beginning, and every new beginning will end. The way Eliot plays with the phrase by changing the position of the elements is a reflection on the discovery of new and hidden possibilities of time. If we think about time as a linear sequence, then one element has to come after another, the beginning is followed by the end. It is in the attainment of truth to see that time becomes spherical and all its elements can be found everywhere, since they are all interdependent and interconnected.

Although Eliot addresses guilt, it does not become a central preoccupation in his poem. "The Dry Salvages" contains the only mention of "regret" that we find in all *Four Quartets*, but even this direct reference to the notion does not give it importance, on the contrary, it devalues it. The reiteration of "wistful regret"

alongside the repetition of "regret", this time as a verb, makes the notion too straightforward, too emphatic, especially considering the illusory nature of the poem as a whole. The implied meaninglessness of grieving for something or somebody that is not even here enforces the diminishing effect. Therefore, when the *Quartets* speaks once explicitly of regret, it is to oppose it, highlighting its futility. Seeing it in the context of the conversation between Krishna and Arjuna – "I sometimes wonder what Krishna meant" – brings the conclusion that regret could be only an example of human nature, which reinforces the importance of being disinterested. Nevertheless, the choice of regret as such an example is unusual.

The reason for such a difference probably lies in the gravity of history that each witnessed. Akhmatova's poem proves time and again more intimate, emotional as if written through personal sufferings, than Eliot's with its philosophical meditations and impersonal descriptions. This may be explained by the fact that as Eliot of *Four Quartets* is a believer who has discovered truth midst the tragedy of history, yet Akhmatova of *Poem Without a Hero* faces inexpressible horrors of totalitarianism, the ravages of war and of what human nature is capable.

Akhmatova, on the other hand, explores in great detail time as causing tragic changes and thus being linked to feelings of guilt and regret for not having prevented the change. This is evident in "The Year Nineteen Thirteen", in which the poetic persona's guests simultaneously represent guilt and impose it on their host. "Epilogue" is also filled with guilt for what Akhmatova's son and millions like him had to endure, paying for the mistakes of their parents' generation.

4.4 Being towards Death: Death as Change and Transformation

Arguably, the greatest change that awaits us all is death, but as the word "change" suggests, *Poem Without a Hero* and *Four Quartets* present death as transformation. In their attitude towards mortality, Eliot and Akhmatova resonate with Martin Heidegger (1889-1927).

The parallel between Heidegger's and Eliot's worldview is particularly highlighted by John Cooper, who believes that the modernism of the 1920s aimed at "weighing up the damage of that earlier calamity, it was Heidegger who gave it its philosophical voice, Eliot who gave it striking poetic expression" (*T.S.Eliot and the Ideology of Four Quartets,* 125). A similar connection is also noted by Michael Bell, who remarks the influence of Heidegger's theory of language on Eliot among other modernists. Heidegger elucidated the power of language to provide us with insights into our world (*The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*, 17). There is no evidence of a connection between Akhmatova and Heidegger; however, her views appear unexpectedly consistent with his theories on Da-sein and time, which is why it is of interest to contrast his ideas to her vision.

In his works, Heidegger elaborated the concept of Da-sein, which can be taken, if simplified, as an ideal human being. Heidegger mentions that "Da-sein exists for the sake of a potentiality-of-being of itself" (*Being and Time,* 333), which can only be realised in time. However, with possibilities and chances time also brings death at the end of Da-sein's journey. In *Being and Time,* Heidegger discusses the concept of *being-towards-death* and suggests that Da-sein is fascinated by death and seeks

it. What is important to note is that death is not something that happens eventually, death is present in every moment of Da-sein's existence in time. *Being-towards-death* predetermines Da-sein's direction towards the future, at the same time building a new existence which is only possible on the basis of the past that never disappears entirely and serves as a foundation for the forthcoming.

Heidegger concludes that if various Da-seins achieve to live historically and it happens in a synchronised mode, then they are able to shape not only their being but destiny. He also mentions it in *Poetry, Language, Thought* (1959): "The world is the self-disclosing openness of the broad paths of the simple and essential decisions in the destiny of a historical people" (47). The suggestion corresponds with Aristotle's truth that is sought only through a repeated effort by many.

All of the above bears a relevant similarity to Eliot's and Akhmatova's views. As if echoing Heidegger, both depict this type of time, full of potential and power. Time is capable of erasing those that ignore its grandeur but it is also able to set us free if we learn lo "live historically", to use Heidegger's term, to live conscious of our being's timeliness and timelessness of being. That is why Akhmatova asks:

> There is no death – everyone knows that,
> It's insipid to repeat it,
> But what exists – let them tell me.[2] (554)

Akhmatova affirms that the non-existence of death is almost painfully obvious to everybody, as her Chistians beliefs hold to be true. However, her inquiry

[2] In Russian: Смерти нет – это всем известно
Повторять это стало пресно
А что есть – пусть расскажут мне. (326)

into what exists both affirms and challenges a conviction that death is only a stage. On the one hand, the statement "There is no death – everyone knows that" sounds ironic, as some common phrase that everyone says but not many understand. In the context of the tragedies that Akhmatova was witnessing while writing the *Poem*, the phrase acquires tragic tones, as if being uttered by someone who has seen death too often to dismiss it so easily. On the other, Akhmatova's question diminishes the significance of death and underlines what needs to be asked: if there is no death, with what are humans left? The answer can be read between the lines of the whole *Poem*. By negating death its primal status, Akhmatova puts extra emphasis on what is before and after death, which is consonant with Heidegger's theory. For both of them, how one lives one's life before death and where one's spirit heads after death is infinitely more relevant than the brief moment of dying when taken in the context of eternity.

Compare Akhmatova's lines with these from "Burnt Norton":

> Yet the enchainment of past and future
> Woven in the weakness of the changing body,
> Protects mankind from heaven and damnation
> Which flesh cannot endure. (BN II. 33-36, 181)

Because man can exist only in time, time, although being "the enchainment", saves man from the absolute "heaven and dmanation". As Eliot wrote in a letter to Geoffrey Curtis: "don't imagine that the 'fear of Hell' is not capital in my theology. It is only balanced by that 'fear of Heaven' so well expressed in one of Newman's Oxford sermons" (*The Poems of T.S. Eliot*, 917). The sermon Eliot refers to is dedicated to the discussion of how an irrelegious person would feel if admitted into

heaven. Newman concludes that for such a person, heaven would be the same as hell for a believer (*Parochial and Plain Sermons*, 7).

To conclude, neither Eliot nor Akhmatova is preoccupied with how short an individual's time is, but what one does with one's time and how that shapes time for us all, or what Heidegger calls "destiny". Here lies the main difference between Heidegger and the poets, for while he is focused on describing the way in which the world and humans should be, they are disturbed by the current state of humankind and intend to guide their readers away from it.

Chapter 5

Historical Time

As the world goes through constant changes, Eliot and Akhmatova aim at recording and interpreting the history of their time. Both *Poem Without a Hero* and *Four Quartets* explore the notion of history is one of the principal dimensions of time.

5.1 The Corridors of History

History is the point of departure and the subject matter of *Poem Without a Hero* and *Four Quartets*. As noted in chapter two, the perception of history changed radically in Modernist time. In the works of Collingwood, Croce, and Ortega y Gasset, among others, history ceased to be a cumulus of facts and became a vibrant force, strongly linked to the power of human interpretation. A similar view had been expressed in "The Presuppositions of Critical History" (1874), in which Francis Herbert Bradley, one of the most prominent influences on young Eliot, explores the theme of disbelief in human judgements and assertions based on comparison or in relation to other phenomena. The central idea of the work is a consequential skepticism towards facts of history and testimonies. A historian becomes the protagonist of making history, as his interpretation shapes the discourse of past events. Bradley's pamphlet highlights the importance of interpretation in history rather than historical data. This vision is expressed throughout *Poem Without a Hero* and *Four Quartets.*

5.1.1 Crossing the "dark waters" of the Past

While *Poem Without a Hero* was initially shaped by war and later affected by various Soviet realities, Eliot's *Four Quartets* would have remained within the lines of "Burnt Norton" but for World War II. This creates a historical link between the texts as they both grew directly out of history. Not only are they dedicated to the questions imposed by history, but they are also founded on the sometimes similar, sometimes disparate personal histories of the two poets.

> The first time this poem came to me was on the night of December 27, 1940, in the Fountain House, having sent, that autumn, one small fragment as a messenger ("You came to Russia from nowhere...").[1] (543)

With such an introduction, the *Poem* begins its historic journey. Readers are told from the beginning that there was a particular time and day that provoked the writing of the poem, immediately contextualising and attaching it to a precise moment in history. The moment is quite relevant as the date "December 27, 1940" suggests. In Tzarist times, Christmas was the main festivity of the year celebrated overnight from December 24 to 25. Since the Soviet regime declared war on religion and intended to substitute it with Marxist ideology, Christmas, like other religious traditions, had to be forgotten. As a result, celebrating New Year became the focal point for all Soviet people. Akhmatova, who was raised in Orthodox traditions but lived under the communists, probably saw New Year's Eve as a special occasion too, as the time to reflect on what had been achieved and what was yet to come.

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[1] In Russian: Первый раз она пришла ко мне в Фонтанный Дом в ночь на 27 декабря 1940 г., прислав как вестника еще осенью один небольшой отрывок («Ты в Россию пришла из ниоткуда...»). (319)

Such thinking was significant in 1940. Russia was not yet touched by the military conflict with the Nazis, the attitude towards them in the USSR at that time was still quite favourable as a consequence of the 1938 pact between Stalin and Hitler). However, the war was reaching ever closer to the Soviet border. Akhmatova was fifty-one years old and found herself on the brink of a new year and a new war, having lost so many of those who were dear to her, her friends, husbands, son, either persecuted by the communist regime, arrested, in concentration camps, or forced into exile. Like Dante, she appeared to be in a dark and hostile forest; unlike him, she had no Virgil to guide her through it.

At this point in her life, Akhmatova finds herself returning to where it all began – her youth which coincided with the dawn of Modernism. This memory permeates the entire poem, and the first fragment of Akhmatova's future work came to her as a recollection of one of Olga Sudeikina's images, Colombina. Interestingly, this first guest from the past visits Akhmatova not merely on the eve of a new year but also, as she narrates in the Foreword, in one of the last winter evenings that she will spend in Saint-Petersburg, renamed Leningrad after the Revolution. That night she would write the first version of "The Year Nineteen Thirteen", the opening part of the poetic triptych.

The opening lines of "The Year Nineteen Thirteen" tightly weave her poem with history:

FROM THE YEAR NINETEEN FORTY
AS IF FROM A TOWER, I SURVEY EVERYTHING.
AS IF BIDDING FAREWELL AGAIN
TO WHAT I PARTED FROM LONG AGO,
AS IF CROSSING MYSELF

AND THEN DESCENDING TO DARK VAULTS[2]. (548)

The transformation that the poetic persona experiences when "descending to dark vaults" is even more striking when read in Russian since the lines literally mean "going under the dark waters". Both images ("dark vaults" in the translation and "dark waters" in the original) evoke an association with a basement, an underground space, deep and unlit, yet "vaults" are much more stable a structure than "waters".

In returning to the past, Akhmatova is bound to experience it differently as she looks back from another era. She is also aware of how fragile the destination of her time-travel is, how responsive it is to any interaction. Another appropriate parallel here is the Heraclitian view that it is impossible to enter the same water twice, and Akhmatova knows whatever comes will not be identical to what it was. She is well aware that history is only a construct which exists in the constant interplay of all its components. Whenever we are to reach for history, it inevitably changes according to our own experience.

5.1.2 Eliot's Water out of Sunlight

A similar yet contrasting image to Akhmatova's "dark waters" appears in *Four Quartets*. Eliot begins his lyrical pilgrimage with a depiction of a rose-garden,

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[2] In Russian: ИЗ ГОДА СОРОКОВОГО,
КАК С БАШНИ, НА ВСЕ ГЛЯЖУ.
КАК БУДТО ПРОЩАЮСЬ СНОВА
С ТЕМ, С ЧЕМ ДАВНО ПРОСТИЛАСЬ,
КАК БУДТО ПЕРЕКРЕСТИЛАСЬ
И ПОД ТЕМНЫЕ СВОДЫ СХОЖУ. (322)

through which we are guided by a bird. The garden is filled with echoes, "the unheard music", "the unseen eyebeam crossed":

> So we moved, and they, in a formal pattern,
> Along the empty alley, into the box circle,
> To look down into the drained pool.
> Dry the pool, dry concrete, brown edged,
> And the pool was filled with water out of sunlight,
> And the lotos rose, quietly, quietly,
> The surface glittered out of heart of light,
> And they were behind us, reflected in the pool. (BN I. 31-38, 180)

The mystical garden does not form part of history as we know it but belongs to the history that we are yet to discover. This history is not about endless suffering, it is about finding light in the suffering. The pool in the garden does not serve as a mirror, thus, we should not be afraid of falling into Narcissus's trap of preoccupation with appearances. The original image of the pool is based on Eliot's real experience. Visiting Burnt Norton in 1934, he was exploring the garden of the then abandoned property and came across just such a pool, which contained no water and was instead filled only with air and sunlight.

However, for Eliot, "The surface glittered out of heart of light, /And they were behind us, *reflected* in the pool."[3] The unknown "they" does not refer to any particular precedent in the poem, instead, it is open to interpretation, whether as invisible spirits reminiscent of those who served Shakespeare's Prospero, or angels, which are closer to the Christian perspective, or perhaps the Buddhist "lotos rose" is a reference to Eastern teachings; "they" are shadows of the past, since they are "behind us", and, as readers we discover later that they are "eternally present".

[3] My italics.

5.2 The Darkness of *Four Quartets*

As uplifting as "water of sunlight" may seem, the *Quartets* are not all light, and the *Poem*-like darkness is also vocal in Eliot's text. It appears in all the *Quartets*, most commonly as "darkness" of the human soul, "internal darkness" (BN III. 28, 182) which the poetic persona perceives himself "in the middle, not only in the middle of the way / But all the way, in a dark wood" (EC II. 39-40, 187). The only time Eliot explicitly links darkness with the flow of time is in the image of a dark lake in "Little Gidding":

> There are other places
> Which also are the world's end, some at the sea jaws,
> Or over a dark lake, in a desert or a city—
> But this is the nearest, in place and time,
> Now and in England. (LG I. 35-39, 202)

Schuchard indicates that "Ferrar's Little Gidding … affirms the promise of Pentecost: the presence and the accessibility of the Holy Spirit in the world" (*Eliot's Dark Angel*). "Little Gidding" – both the quartet and the location – is thus the quintessence of this promise and as such, it embraces "other places" of other saints: "over a dark lake" – St. Kevin at Glendalough, "in a dessert" – St. Anthony and the hermits of Thebes, "or a city" – St. Anthony at Padua (Schuchard *Eliot's Dark Angel)*. Thus, darkness is transformed from one of ignorance or spiritual negligence to the one connected with spiritual awakening. This is the darkness that prevails in "East Coker". The quartet, which reiterates the unity of end and beginning, follows the pattern and brings together such opposites as darkness and light, as in "So the darkness shall be the light, and the stillness the dancing" (EC III. 28, 189), alongside darkness as a path to God: "I said to my soul, be still, and let the dark come upon

you / Which shall be the darkness of God" (EC III. 12-13, 188). In both quotes, the passage from darkness to light or one of God is expressed with "shall", for this is the state to be reached. Earlier, in the same movement, the poetic persona describes the current condition of people:

> O dark dark dark. They all go into the dark,
> The vacant interstellar spaces, the vacant into the vacant,
> The captains, merchant bankers, eminent men of letters,
> The generous patrons of art, the statesmen and the rulers,
> Distinguished civil servants, chairmen of many committees,
> Industrial lords and petty contractors, all go into the dark.
>
> (EC III. 1-6, 188)

Through this extensive list of those going "into the dark", that is death, which makes no differentiation between servants or rulers, Eliot comes to that other darkness, one of the mystics.

The mystical way is described in detail by Evelyn Underhill (1875-1941). She was not a trained philosopher but a devoted Christian with a genuine passion for discovering the new. Longenbach, describing her influence on T.S. Eliot, says that "Eliot *absorbed* the modern mysticism of Evelyn Underhill"[4] (*Modernist Poetics of History,* 23). Jain maintains that "Evelyn Underhill's *Mysticism* appears to have made a particular impact on Eliot when he was a student" (*T.S. Eliot and American Philosophy,* 194). Robert Crawford indicates that Eliot even summarised the 1912 edition of *Mysticism* on notecards (*Young Eliot,* 223). Jain also mentions that as much as Eliot was impressed with Underhill's work, he was also rather opposed to her "bland mysticism", but still celebrated her as "a director of souls" and a scholar of the great mystics' heritage (*T.S. Eliot and American Philosophy*, 196-197).

[4] Italics are added by me

Akhmatova did not mention Underhill nor in any way acknowledged being conversant with her work, but the role of mysticism in the development of the Silver Age, if not the whole history of Russia, is demonstrated in Forrester's *Russian Silver Age Poetry* (2015) and McQuillen's *The Modernist Masquerade* (2013). Mysticism also forms part of *Poem Without a Hero* but is used mostly as an antagonistic power that was one of the forerunners of the Revolution in Russia.

In her description of the mystical way, Underhill calls its fourth step "the dark night of the soul" using St. John of the Cross's words. When "the dark night of the soul" is reached, one longing for the spiritual awakening is faced with the hardest challenge of all, the rejection of one's ego and the pragmatic worldly orientation. Once passed, this phase opens to infinite possibilities for the mystic, as he is now capable of becoming one with truth.

Therefore, Eliot's darkness is ambivalent. The beginning can be the end and vice versa, or history can be servitude and freedom, darkness is both destructive and creativ. Akhmatova's darkness, although it also contains a more optimistic element within itself (for instance, reliving the dark past of her youth, she is able to see some of her old friends) is still the darkness of the inferno, rather than the purgatorio.

5.3 Bearing Witness in *Poem Without a Hero* and *Four Quartets*

The *Poem* and the *Quartets* also refer to particular historical events. These references are similar in tone but diverse in the facts they reflect due to Eliot's and Akhmatova's diverse biographies.

5.3.1 Troubled History in "The Year Nineteen Thirteen"

History lies behind almost every line of the first part of *Poem Without a Hero*. The October Revolution is alluded to in the masquerade. In the second chapter of "The Year Nineteen Thirteen", Akhmatova mentions "the phantom of Tsushima's hell" (558). This image in parts recreates another visitor, her old friend, Sudeikina, and the atmosphere of the time they shared. "Tsushima's hell" refers to 1905 during the Russo-Japanese War and was a sea battle in which the Russian navy lost two-thirds of the fleet. The tragedy had a special meaning for Akhmatova, as Haight puts it: "The innocent world of Anya's childhood ended sharply and suddenly in 1905" (*Anna Akhmatova: A Poetic Pilgrimage*, 9). The Gorenko family was not affected directly by the battle, but it was a tragedy for the whole Russian nation, and true to her nature, the young Akhmatova responded to it intensely. Such was the impression of the event that it lingered in her mind even after she had witnessed two world wars, the Civil War, Leninism, and Stalinism, all of which also appear in the poem.

The whole of part 1 of the *Poem* revolves around those years in which Akhmatova affirmed herself as a poet but which determined a horrifying turn of Russian history. The atmosphere of "Hoffmania", of a nightmare full of masks and pretence along with the increasing feeling of impending tragedy, awful but inevitable, is what one senses in the lines of "The Year Nineteen Thirteen". Her verse, however, does not simply transmit a subjective perception of those times but serve as a poetic testimony to what Akhmatova lived together with her

contemporaries. Thus, the whole first chapter of the *Poem* is a reflection on the past that was so close to Akhmatova and became forever united with her destiny.

The pre- and post-revolutionary years do not only form the general atmosphere of the opening section of the *Poem*; they are also part of its foreground. Akhmatova mentions, for instance, "Mazur swamps" and "Carpathian heights" when talking about the future that Kniazev chose not to pursue by deciding to end his life at his beloved's porch. Although both references are geographical locations in Eastern Europe, their names also remind readers of battles of World War I. In the Mazur swamps, in 1914, the Russian army under the command of general Aleksandr Samsonov (1859-1914) suffered a defeat, which took away the lives of thousands of Russian soldiers, whereas the Carpathians acted as a background to the battles of 1917, which claimed an estimated 200 000 lives (Akhmatova *Sochineniya v Dvux Tomah*, 435).

The mention of the tragic events is significant not only as the "what might have been" of Viacheslav Kniazev. As much as Akhmatova saw her contemporaries and herself as accountable for what she called in the *Poem* "the real Twentieth Century", she was well aware that World War I played a significant role in ruining Tsarist Russia and establishing a new order, which took away millions of lives.

5.3.2 "Burnt Norton": The "need for stillness" in the "noisy and angry time"

Unlike the first part of the *Poem*, Eliot's opening quartet "Burnt Norton" is filled with serenity and transmits a meditative rather than an anxious state of mind, which

is particularly striking considering that it was written in the turmoil of the years that would lead to World War II. The images provoked by the tragedy of the war occupy an important place in the *Quartets*, yet its first part focuses more on peace than on war. In the introductory notes to his *Eliot's Dark Angel*, Ronald Schuchard quotes Robert Penn Warren's obituary for Eliot and his rhetorical question regarding the whole of the *Quartets*: "Consider the *Four Quartets*. Who else, in that noisy and angry time, tried to define the anguish of the need for stillness?". No answer is needed here for it is evident that Eliot, to paraphrase Kipling, was able to keep his head when all about him were losing theirs.

As the poem set "at the still point of the turning world", "Burnt Norton" refrains from addressing particular historical events, although the title recalls the events of Eliot's visit to Hale in 1934. Despite the significance of the place for Eliot as a symbol of a "road not taken", Gardner sees it as nothing more than a reference to his personal experience and assures her readers that the estate "should be merely a deserted house and garden wandered into without knowing anything whatsoever about the history of the house or who had lived in it" (*The Composition of Four Quartets,* 37). She expresses the same view in the study *The Art of T.S. Eliot*, in which she writes: "in *Four Quartets* the title of the whole poem tells us nothing of its subject, and the titles of the separate poems tell us very little. The poems are not "about places" though their subjects are bound up with particular places" (43). This view opposes Spender's, for instance, who is certain that each quartet is associated as much with Eliot's own history as that of the place itself (*Eliot*, 155).

I contend that it is undeniable that there must be a reason for Eliot to choose those locations in particular as titles of his last major poem. There is a certain tread in moving from the place of "what might have been" which in its name bears the stamp of destruction and loss to the point where Eliot's ancestor refused many potential futures to find his destiny in North America and, in doing so, to shape the fate of his great-grandchildren. Later, following the founder of the American Eliots, we find ourselves on the American coast, that was so familiar to the poet when he was still a naive young boy. Finally, the end of the journey is found back in England, at Little Gidding, the English village that embraced Eliot but also the spirit of the Anglican Church and true faith.

Yet, it would not be a poem by Eliot if it was conceivable to read it so straightforwardly; Eliot who is considered as clear in his self-expression as he is elusive is not likely to have been satisfied with such a simplistic view. Although the *Quartets* are built on his personal experiences, by no means are they *about* those; they transcend what is beyond personal experience, and then invite to reach an eternal reality beyond triviality and swift movement of our living.

5.4 "In my beginning is my end": Two Perspectives on History in "East Coker"

The second quartet stands out in its relation to history. For instance, Kenneth Asher suggests that in the first movement of "East Coker", the poet looks around him as if through the eyes of Thomas Elyot (*T.S. Eliot and Ideology,* 100). Gish agrees but broadens the outset of the quartet to the whole era of the Renaissance, not just Elyot's experience and time (*Time in the Poetry of T.S. Eliot,* 104-105). A strong

relation of "East Coker" to history is also supported by Moody's study, in which he indicates that the initial premise of *beginning* and *end* refers to human life and historical process: "The poet is now not transcending but entering into history" (*T.S. Eliot: The Poet*, 206).

One of the most significant among those rare occasions when Eliot does address history plainly is the opening line of "East Coker": "In my beginning is my end". This is one of the most quoted fragments of the poem becoming a recurrent motif for the quartet in which it first appears and a vital element to the inner functioning of all the *Quartets.*

There are several points in history to which this line could be connected. The farthest from the contemporary age would be Heraclitus, whose philosophy repeatedly appears in the *Quartets*, either as an inspiration or even as a direct quote. In his copy of a book on ancient philosophy, Eliot marked the fragment: "In the circumference of a circle beginning and end coincide" (*The Poems of T.S. Eliot*, 928). Another link is to Mary Stuart, for the words from "East Coker" were her motto. Eliot rejected the suggestion that the quartet should be linked to the figure of the Queen of Scots, except for the relevance of the phrase. The idea of the unity of beginning and end was also considered by Bradley, who wrote in *Appearance and Reality* that "the end lies hid in that which is assumed at the beginning" (270). As is usual with Eliot's poetry, it seems impossible to establish only one source that became decisive in including the line in "East Coker". In this connection, a poem of Akhmatova comes to mind:

> Do not repeat – your soul has wealth untold –
> What others found to say in their creations.

> Or could it be that poetry itself
> Is only one magnificent quotation? (Nayman, 29)

It is not an effortless task to draw a direct line between poetic lines and a particular source, nor does it seem of importance to find the exact answer here. What is of interest is that whether or not it was Eliot's intention, the opening of "East Coker" does carry us back to the sixteenth century and the tragic destiny of Mary Stuart. Even if we assume that the quotation was primarily inspired by the philosophy of Heraclitus and Bradley, the reference still serves a similar purpose in uniting past and present.

5.5 War and Peace

Addressing war experiences, *Poem Without a Hero* and *Four Quartets* link it to the notion of peace. By doing so, the poems never let their readers feel too overwhelmed by the present and instead constantly remind us of what is to come if we wish.

5.5.1 "Burnt Norton", "East Coker", and "The years of *l'entre deux guerres"*

Most of historical references in *Four Quartets* appear to be in relation to war. For instance, in "East Coker", Eliot mentions "the lights are extinguished" (EC III. 14, 188), implying the darkness of theatre when the performance is about to start. Christopher Ricks holds that the hidden origin of the line is the instructions that were circulated during 1939 in Britain, which insisted on the vital importance of

turning off or covering the sources of light at night so as not to be of help to the enemy planes (*The Poems of T.S. Eliot*, 943). A more explicit war image appears in this quartet too, and opens its last movement:

> So here I am, in the middle way, having had twenty years –
> Twenty years largely wasted, the years of *l'entre deux guerres* –
> Trying to learn to use words, and every attempt
> Is a wholly new start, and a different kind of failure (EC V. 1-4, 191).

The context for the reference is situated together with a reference to Dante, precisely, the opening of the *Divine Comedy:* "Half way along the road we have to go, / I found myself obscured in a great forest, Bewildered, and I knew I had lost the way" (47). Noteworthy is Gardner's description of the text of "East Coker" as "remarkable for the amount of direct quotations and obvious reminiscence it contains – Mary Stuart's motto, the passage from Sir Thomas Elyot, St John of the Cross, Divine Comedy" (*The Composition of Four Quartets*, 42). The abundance of quotations in the quartet further historicises the poem, for then history becomes both its subject and its object.

Eliot is pursuing several aims. Firstly, the value of Dante's piece for Western tradition is immeasurable and one cannot overestimate its significance for Eliot's work. Robert Sencourt in his memoir of Eliot speaks of Dante as having "the deepest and most abiding influence" in comparison to any other poet his friend studied at Harvard (*T.S. Eliot: A Memoir*, 29). Furthermore, Donoghue states that "Dante was always Eliot's exemplary writer for the visual imagination" (*Words Alone*, 40).

That the talent of Dante was of immense significance for Eliot makes such a direct borrowing still more relevant. Thus, the twenty years between World War I and World War II are turned into that dark forest where Dante started his spiritual journey after becoming lost in its darkness and meaninglessness. Secondly, a reference to a piece of art that has already proved its eternal value to humankind aligned with the two wars continue the already suggested connectedness of time: art becomes life, eternity becomes modern headlines, an image created centuries ago becomes a nightmare of the twentieth century. By putting together the years between the wars with one of the world's most quoted lines, Eliot historicises history itself.

Another discernible hint in the passage of "East Coker" is the suggestion of the loneliness of the lyrical protagonist, which is not unusual, given that he finds himself between two world wars. Perhaps, this *I* is to be true to Dante's phrasing. Yet, the effect of the pronoun spreads beyond the precision of the quote to imply remoteness from humankind, experienced in the face of yet another impending world war.

The phrasing also follows the Dantesque pattern in the sense that it makes Eliot's experience both personal and universal. Just as Dante depicted the whole of Christian cosmology through his own metaphysical odyssey, Eliot expressing his struggles and findings in those times of loss and despair transmits the omnipresent truth. Spender takes a more religion-based view of this phenomenon, affirming that "in *Four Quartets* there is the individual alone with God, exploring experiences

which point to the possibility of a life where eternity intersects with time" (*Eliot,* 11).

Thus, Eliot, though unaware of it proved one of the foundations of Nikolai Berdyaev's system of thought, which is that "man is a microcosmos and microtheos" (*The Beginning and the End,* 172). Berdyaev saw himself as a disciple of Heraclitus, who is one of the main points of reference for Eliot; moreover, Berdyaev, a genuinely religious writer, illuminates the spiritualist and religious components of *Four Quartets*. Berdyaev is the only author more tightly connected to Akhmatova than to Eliot. Having left Russia in 1922, a few years after the Revolution, Berdyaev published most of his works outside Russia, and Akhmatova became acquainted with them only later in life, in the 1940s. However, she was amazed at the similarity of his views and hers. Although Eliot did not discuss Berdyaev's philosophy, he must have read the reviews of Berdyaev's work in *The Criterion* which he edited, for instance, Frank McEachran's review of Berdyaev's *The End of Our Time* (*The Criterion*, vol. 13, January 1934). Berdyaev was forced to leave Russia and spent the rest of his life in exile, lecturing and writing on numerous subjects, such as freedom, spirituality, history, and Christianity.

Berdyaev's *The Beginning and the End* (1947) is an eschatological study on the relation between the divine and the human. For him, man actively paves the way to the end of the world, which is to bring the kingdom of God. Berdyaev affirms that an individual is to embrace the prospect of the end of the world in every single moment of life and thus, "At each moment of one's living, what is needed is to put an end to the old world and to begin the new" (254). From this perspective, the self

is both a world in itself and a creator of a new world, in other words, the self is an intersection of history and eternity.

The history of *Four Quartets* belongs to the world of ideas in Plato's terminology. This history is not the history of time but of eternity, as the poetic persona turns to the idea of history rather than to its earthly representations. Eliot does not refer to specific temporal events, but on the contrary, he takes the temporally specific moment in history and gives it a universal dimension viewing it *sub speciae aeternitatis*. "Here, the intersection of the timeless moment / Is England and nowhere. Never and always" (LG I. 52-53, 202). As in "The Dry Salvages" Eliot distinguishes between earthly time as "the river is within us" and eternal time as "the sea is all about us" (I. 15, 193), so he does between the two histories since the self belongs to both time and eternity.

5.5.2 "The death of hope and despair": War in "Little Gidding"

Eliot again mentions the war in the last quartet of "Little Gidding". This fragment is bound to have a special meaning in the context of the poem as it is the finale of *Four Quartets*. Therefore, the numerous studies of the work suggest various views regarding the meaning of "Little Gidding" yet all agree on its specific role.

Emphasising how particular the last quartet is, Spender also describes it as "the darkest, most wintry, most death saturated of the quartets" (*Eliot,* 172). The last quartet presents the poetic persona's encounter with the subject of his poem,

death, and reflects the view of the poem as embracing and overcoming the inevitability of death.

This line of argument finds its reflection in Gardner's *The Art of T.S. Eliot* too, however, she applies to the poem the paradigm of the four fundamental elements. In Gardner's opinion, "Little Gidding" is related to fire, a multidimensional image, as she calls this fire "torment to the self-loving" as well as "purgation to the penitent" and "ecstasy to the blessed" (183). Therefore, Gardner comes to the same conclusion as Spender because for her, those combined fires symbolise the unity of mortal and immortal life.

Perhaps the most notable of those references is the one opening the second movement of the last quartet:

> Ash on an old man's sleeve
> Is all the ash the burnt roses leave.
> Dust in the air suspended
> Marks the place where a story ended.
> Dust inbreathed was a house –
> The wall, the wainscot and the mouse.
> The death of hope and despair,
> This is the death of air. (LG II. 1-8, 202-203)

Ricks comments that these lines refer to May 10, 1941, when London and its inhabitants were choked with burning paper from two bombed warehouses full of books (*The Poems of T.S. Eliot,* 1002). Eliot hints at this particular event also by including a pun "story" – "storey", since the warehouse was a one-storey building. Thus, a material building of one floor transforms into a finished tale. This brings me back to history, which is not confirmed by Eliot but is appropriate nonetheless, because history started as stories mixed with myths and because every story

becomes history, both in the sense that once it finishes it is passed but remains within the matter of history, even imaginary stories, like those belonging to "what might have been", have an effect on our existence.

Ashes can be seen to symbolise the pettiness a life taken on its own, for everything turns into dust with time. The view is rather neutral in its connotation as it follows the natural course of things. However, the ashes from these passages are also a war image, representing peaceful existence turned into dust by a simple act of violence. Eliot draws an opposition between peace and war: while peace intends to create and evolve, war's only aim is annihilation.

5.5.3 War Between the Lines of "The Dry Salvages"

The repercussion of war also finds its place in more subtly phrased references. Eliot's American quartet, "The Dry Salvages", is linked to the element of, its grounding is in the sea, since the title references a location on the coast of New England. Additionally, the imaginary trip we are to undertake as readers of the *Quartets* is reflected in numerous images of crossing the sea. Such an endeavour implies a certain risk about which Eliot appears to warn those following him in Movement IV. The latter represents a prayer to Saint Mary for everyone who is connected to the sea, for instance, from fishermen to casual travellers. The poetic voice is also asking to mention in prayer those dead by water:

> Repeat a prayer also on behalf of
> Women who have seen their sons or husbands

> Setting forth, and not returning:
> Figlia del tuo figlio,
> Queen of Heaven. (DS IV. 6-10, 199)

This is another reference to Dante, particularly "Paradiso", in which the line "figlia del tuo figlio" ("daughter of thy son") appears as well as the address to Saint Mary as "Queen of Heaven". As a mother, Saint Mary understands the pain of women who have seen their loved ones "not returning"; in Dante's perspective, Mary is a daughter of her son too. She unites all mothers, and their pain brings them closer to the Mother of God. This cannot justify the death of those who never came back home; it can only aspire to give some meaning to their loss. Eliot hints throughout the *Quartets* that through purgatory (and hence, pain and suffering), the self becomes better, purer, nearer to the true world.

These lines stand out in contrast to the others in the movement for the historical context of "The Dry Salvages". Written in 1940 and published in February of 1941, the quartet coincided with the Battle of the Atlantic, which was the longest naval campaign of World War II, from 1939 and until the end of the conflict. However, 1940 was the year of constant defeat for the allied forces, whose ships were destroyed in great numbers. In relation to the protagonists of those months, German U-boats, Winston Churchill would remark: "...the only thing that ever frightened me during the war was the U-boat peril" ("The Battle of the Atlantic: The U-boat Peril"). Therefore, the prayer for those who died at sea had a special resonance when it was published. For Eliot's contemporaries, it was something they could all relate to, the reality people lived and feared. The more

astonishing is that in the middle of the bloodshed, Eliot asks for a prayer whose only purpose is to bring peace. There is no vengeance, no reproach.

5.5.4 "What had turned to dust": Life and Death in *Poem Without a Hero*

Eliot's "ash on an old man's sleeve" has several echoes in *Poem Without a Hero*. One appears in the first chapter, where the description of the bombing serves as the background for the demonic masquerade to begin: "Lights flashed on, sirens howled / And like a cupola the ceiling swelled"[5] (550). There is another reference in "Epilogue", the last part of the *Poem:*

> Seized by mortal fear
> Of what had turned to dust
> And recognizing the hour of vengeance,
> Lowering her dry eyes
> And wringing her hands, Russia
> Fled before me to the east[6] (576)

Both Eliot's and Akhmatova's passages refer to war, bombing, and death. While Eliot refers to the death of such essential but abstract concepts as "hope and despair", Akhmatova introduces the notion of the whole country turned to dust. For

[5] In Russian: "Вспыхнул свет, завыли сирены / И, как купол, вспух потолок" (323)

[6] In Russian: От того, что сделалась прахом,
Обуянная смертным страхом
И отмщения зная срок,
Опустивши глаза сухие
И ломая руки, Россия
Предо мною шла на восток (344)

her, it is crucial to enforce the opposition peace verses war by including it in such an antagonistic system as life itself.

Dust appears twice in *Poem Without a Hero*, in the aforementioned fragment but also earlier as a reference to "camp dust". Hence, the dust is not only that of an object that symbolises peaceful existence, but it is the dust of existence itself; so the dualism of peace versus war becomes that of life versus death. This dimension added to the image of dust/ashes is especially relevant for Akhmatova, who witnessed the slaughter of her people by those who claimed to serve them, and witnessed human souls and bodies, being devitalised both metaphorically (through interrogations, the constant fear of being taken away at night, fear for family and friends) and literally, as Soviet NKVD or KGB did not need to justify their actions.

Thus, although both poems were written, or were begun, during the war years, neither remained within the genre of war poetry. As fundamental as those circumstances were for the birth of the texts, the two poets also intended to look at events from afar so as to put things in perspective. As discussed in Chapter 1, it was this ability to transform personal and intimate experience into the universal and transcendental that brought Akhmatova her early fame, which followed her throughout her life.

5.6 "The Unhumanly Face of War" and Heidegger's Living Historically

The portrait of the war in the poems is two-fold. Eliot and Akhmatova speak as witnesses to the tragedy, so the poems can be seen as first-hand testimony. As affected as Eliot and Akhmatova are by the war, they are aware that World War II is the consequence of previous actions, and therefore, viewed from a certain remove, which allows a distancing from emotion and a meditation on recent occurrences. Ergo, the close-up view of the war expands to encompass history in general as the two poets refer to historical landmarks of which they had no personal knowledge.

Poem Without a Hero and *Four Quartets* embody what Heidegger calls "existing historically". Even when talking of such grandiose historical events as World War II or Stalinist terror, Eliot and Akhmatova shun being overly dramatic. Their concise language charges images with multiple meanings avoiding explicit explanations. As Heidegger when discussing Da-sein, they do not view individuals in their outstanding representations, the way to judge people is only by their average everydayness. In quotidian activities, one is free to employ one's environment and things in it; so, generally speaking, the whole world is our workshop. At the same time, we do depend on the environment for we always exist within a context and not in a void and what is more, we feel captivated by our surroundings.

Take for instance, the above-quoted lines of "Little Gidding":

> Ash on an old man's sleeve
> Is all the ash the burnt roses leave.
> Dust in the air suspended

Marks the place where a story ended. (LG II. 1-4, 202)

And Akhmatova experiencing a city being bombed: “Lights flashed on, sirens howled / And like a cupola the ceiling swelled” (550).

As powerful as both images are, neither uses explicit violence or shocking scenes in describing such a traumatic experience as bombing during the war. The same refusal to dramatise is evident whenever Eliot or Akhmatova refers to the tragic history that they were to endure. However, their understatement provokes an even stronger effect on readers than if the images were more descriptive. Their histories are drama itself that would be undermined by explicitness.

Following their low-key intonation in portraying some of the most horrifying historical periods ever, Eliot and Akhmatova stick to everyday discourse, hardly ever allowing themselves dramatics. Their writing styles are based on clarity, hence, the simplicity of language and complexity of meaning. Eliot addresses “mud and sapphires”, “hospital” and “nurse”, “cargo of dead negroes, cows and chicken coops”. These are far from trivial in the context of the poem, but they refer us to day-to-day life, in which the higher meaning can and should be explored. Akhmatova, on the other hand, employs “lace shawl”[7] (551) when describing herself, and that shawl was indeed the clothing item that she wore every day, and she refers to “cupboard and stove” as if some supernatural power were hiding between them:

> Is the new moon playing a joke,
> Or is someone really there once more

[7] In Russian: “кружевную шаль” (324)

Standing between the cupboard and the stove?
The eyes are open and the forehead pale... [8](554)

Most strikingly, Akhmatova includes a dialogue with her editor in the second chapter of the *Poem*. This dialogue consists of the editor's superficial questions and the poetic persona's meaningful answers and reflections. The way in which she treats the editor is indicative of her Heidegger-like persona, who is always in a state of self-reflection and search for the superior meaning. Such persona remains equally worthy, whether in a trivial conversation or in the middle of a war.

5.7 "At the threshold stands – Destiny": The Role of History

History is the axis of *Poem Without a Hero* and *Four Quartets*. I have discussed so far the essential role of history in the creation of these poetic texts but what still begs elaboration is what kind of history Eliot and Akhmatova refer to, and why history is of such vital importance to them.

First, both poems address personal history, which presents empirical facts, treated subjectively, as they are tied to the emotions and the limitations of the individual. This is the type of history that perhaps is most familiar to us, and this is how all history begins. In the words of Paul Ricoeur, "we must not forget that everything starts not from the archives but from testimony" (*Memory, History,*

[8] In Russian: Шутка ль месяца молодого,
Или вправду там кто-то снова
Между печкой и шкафом стоит?
Бледен лоб и глаза открыты... (326-327)

Forgetting, 147). Furthermore, it is this understanding of history that finds its reflection in the poems so closely connected to Clio's domain.

As with the image of war in these poems, personal events are woven into a bigger canvas of the history of the world. On this scale, fragments of their own history echo with the history of the whole generation becoming part of the historiographical process. Eliot and Akhmatova cease to be two individuals and grow into the voice of their time, and, thus, witnesses become chroniclers.

Ricoeur further observes that "the historian's representation is indeed a present image of an absent thing; but the absent thing itself gets split into disappearance into and existence in the past" (*Memory, History, Forgetting*, 280). The significance of Ricoeur's statement here is due to the insight he gives on a paradox of historiography as it intends to impress the past in our memory. Therefore, what is at play here is the interaction between the temporal and the eternal.

Having been transformed into the testimony of the "between the two wars" generation, the experiences of Eliot and Akhmatova shift from the temporal and personal to the eternal, universal experience. So the pool of concrete in Burnt Norton, in fact, is a version of the still point, while the words on the building where Akhmatova resided, "Deus conservat omnia", are transformed into a universal plea for all people and all times. Eliot's war experience in the air-raid links current affairs and newspaper headlines with the history of eternity. In parallel, Akhmatova's memory of prison queues becomes the memory of everybody's imprisonment, those on both sides of the bars equally.

Eliot's and Akhmatova's conception of history is analogous with Berdyaev's. In *The Meaning of History*, the Russian philosopher writes: "History is the result of deep interaction between eternity and time; it is the incessant eruption of eternity into time" (67). In this book, he reinterprets the Christian understanding of time and history from an existentialist point of view. Thus, it is evident that Akhmatova and Eliot had imbibed such understanding of history and time long before the creation of the *Poem* or the *Quartets*. What is of significance, though, is that they came back to that notion in the poems which were to serve as a last symphony to their work.

So why is it so important to the two Modernists, why do they turn to history at such apocalyptic times?

The answer is poured out in the verse of *Poem Without a Hero* and *Four Quartets*. By moving in multi-historical space, where Heraclitus converses with Dante and Saint John of the Cross, and where the poets' tears and fears provoked by bombs or air raids turn into the eternal choir of truth, Eliot and Akhmatova state that one must learn from history.

Echoing the arguments of Berdyaev, Akhmatova and Eliot prove that "history is not an objective empirical datum, it is a myth" (*The Meaning of History*, 21). "Myth" here does not stand for a fictional narration, but the opposite, our reality made of personal experiences, intuitive knowledge, constant co-action of past, present, and future, and our interpretation of all of them. The interpretation of the past is the origin of our capacity to perceive the world.

Therefore, history is all around us, history is us. We live in it, we sin in it, but we can also find freedom in it, and this is the ultimate goal of history. This is also the reason that history (and time, more generally) is of such importance to Eliot and Akhmatova in the middle of the war as well as in their own lives.

In "Little Gidding", Eliot phrases it as "history may be servitude, history may be freedom" (LG III. 13-14, 206), reminding us that it is still our choice to learn or not, to find truth or keep living in deception, to become free or remain slaves to the circle of the history, since "a people that forgets its history is doomed to repeat it", to quote Santayana (*The Life of Reason*). Donoghue also views "Little Gidding" as related to the binary nature of death and life, mortality and immortality. However, for him, the quartet proclaims "the survival of the gods" (286). Donald Childs's *Thomas Stearns Eliot: Mystic, Son, and Lover* views "Little Gidding" as a purgatorial fire leading us to a blessing or a hymn to God: "'Little Gidding''s conclusion is a transfigured one in which history may be defined not as a nightmare, chaos, but rather as an unending process of self-discovery, full of suffering, certainly, but also full of growth and divine love" (203). According to this perspective, the history of humankind merges with the history of faith and the ongoing human quest for meaning. Akhmatova's "Soon I will need a lyre, / But that of Sophocles, not Shakespeare. / At the threshold stands – Destiny"[9] (569) echoes the same idea, emphasising the liberating power of those who reflect (like philosophers), which is so needed in present times.

[9] In Russian: "Скоро мне нужна будет лира, / Но Софокла уже, не Шекспира. На пороге стоит судьба" (338)

As Eliot and Akhmatova witnessed the twentieth-century tragedies, they faced arguably the most horrifying consequences of people's incapacity if not unwillingness to learn from history. Two world wars, their aftermath, the totalitarian regimes they brought to power, which would consequently feed a totally new mentality of constant spying, distrust and the competition to outdo your rival's violence and shamelessness.

The only reason for them to have happened, as Eliot and Akhmatova portray, is human ignorance and spiritual inertia. Depicting the historical process, whose origin dates back to the fall, they insist on seeing destiny not as an inevitable ruthless power but only the result of our choices. In shaping our destiny, we can remain in servitude to it. Yet we can also turn its course so as to transform it into our liberty in so far as our acts are moved by spiritual principles.

So, the darkness and tragic tone of the poems are not the two poets' renunciation, they are the means of the soul's awakening, for which one needs to be fully aware of one's own darkness and tragedy. The rapt attention of the *Poem* and *Quartets* to their poetic personae's actual and potential past is not nostalgia but the active force that should break the enslaving pattern of history. These poems, after all, are not simply verses, they are the anvil of a new history which remembers and learns, the history of freedom, and the key to freedom is to be found in our memory of history and time.

Chapter 6

The Ghosts of the Past and the Future

One of the most emblematic representations of history and its future in *Poem Without a Hero* and *Four Quartets* is reflected in the images of ghosts. Their role and importance in the text vary but what is of significance is that ghosts are equally present with the living. Whether they are a guide for the narrator or their worst enemy, the ghosts of the poems cannot be denied existence.

6.1 The Compound Ghost of *Four Quartets*

"Familiar compound ghost" of "Little Gidding" is one of the most significant images in Eliot's *Four Quartets*:

> I met one walking, loitering and hurried
> As if blown towards me like the metal leaves
> Before the urban dawn wind unresisting.
> And as I fixed upon the down-turned face
> That pointed scrutiny with which we challenge
> The first-met stranger in the waning dusk
> I caught the sudden look of some dead master
> Whom I had known, forgotten, half recalled
> Both one and many; in the brown baked features
> The eyes of a familiar compound ghost (LG II. 33-42, 203-204).

An intriguing image, the ghost is open to interpretation, though as Eliot stated in his letter to John Hayward (1905-1965), the ghost was never meant to be a concrete individual: "But why the phrase 'compound ghost' 'both one and many' should still leave people convinced that the stranger was one particular person, I don't understand" (*The Poems of T.S. Eliot*, 1012). Ironically, Akhmatova had a

similar struggle with some of her readers, who wanted to limit her text. Her response was to include a sort of disclaimer prior to the main body of the *Poem*, in which she states:

> The poem does not have any third, seventh, or twenty-ninth meanings.
> I shall neither change it nor explain it.
> "What I have written – I have written"[1] (544)

Eliot applied the same approach as he never published any commentary on his *Quartets*. However, in another letter, from September 2, 1961, he did confess that the main inspiration for the ghost had been William Butler Yeats (1865-1939), and that he also had in mind Jonathan Swift (1667-1745) and Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-1898) (*The Poems of T.S. Eliot,*1012). Besides these figures of the past, Dante and his old teacher, Brunetto Latini, are also implied.

Bernard Bergonzi, who supports the figures of Brunetto Latini, Swift, and, primarily, Yeats as the ghost's compounds, describes the lines dedicated to the encounter with the ghost as some of the most directly personal poetry that Eliot has written and indicates that when the poet intends to write personally, "he uses Dante as a model and a point of departure" (*T.S. Eliot,* 171). Bergonzi attributes such a characteristic to Eliot's vision expressed as early as 1919, in "Tradition and the Individual Talent":

> No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. (*The Sacred Wood*, 49)

[1] In Russian: Никаких третьих, седьмых и двадцать девятых смыслов поэма не содержит. Ни изменять ее, ни объяснять я не буду. «Еже писахъ — писахъ» (320)

Thus, what Eliot does in "Little Gidding" goes further in paying tribute to Yeats using Dantesque sounds, according to Bergonzi and other scholars. The tribute is the means of reconciliation with the Irish poet, with whom Eliot had some aesthetic and religious differences (*T.S. Eliot*, 172). The lines, like the whole of the *Quartets*, could also be seen as Eliot's own purgatory, through which Eliot wishes to guide others and himself.

In *Words Unheard: A Guide through Eliot's Four Quartets,* Harry Blamires develops the connection between Eliot's Yeats and Dante's Latini from the religious point of view (147-148). He asserts that the purpose of the ghostly image was to reconcile with he who if he did not actually guide Eliot, at least had an undeniable impact on him as Eliot admitted. That reconciliation was no easy task for him, neither was it for Dante. Both felt compelled to express their debt to their mentors while aware that neither Latini nor Yeats would be found among the blessed in paradiso. In the *Divine Comedy*, Dante places Latini in the seventh circle of the Infierno, simultaneously paying tribute to Latini while confirming his teacher's sinful nature. Eliot avoids any judgement but, as Blamires suggests, the lack of precision in the ghost's description could be seen as conflicted (*Words Unheard*, 147).

Spender's perspective on the ghost is particularly relevant. He does agree on the role of Yeats for the understanding of the image, and Dante's influence on the style of the fragment. However, he switches from "what is said" to "what is avoided being said", and consequently, from the identity of the ghost to the fact that Eliot

did not wish to identify the ghost in the poem; for him, the ghost is "both inside historic time and outside it" (*Eliot*, 174-175). My idea aligns with Spender's as he spells out clearly the connection between the compound ghost and the notion of a transcendent dimension of selfhood.

Another consideration is Eliot's intentional refusal to establish a direct parallel between the ghost and any real person (except in his private letters), especially if viewing it in the light of Akhmatova's explicitness regarding any possible "meta"-readings of her text. The ghost's presence in the poem is considerably more modest than that of the ghosts in *Poem Without a Hero*, and his purpose appears more defined and less ambiguous, which empowers his message. The reference to Dante, which allows a reading of the ghost's lines as personal, also provides us with an indication of how to perceive this figure.

In the speech of the compound ghost, we find regret as a largely unexpected yet inevitable outcome of a life lived wrongly:

> Let me disclose the gifts reserved for age
> To set a crown upon your lifetime's effort.
> First, the cold friction of expiring sense
> Without enchantment, offering no promise
> But bitter tastelessness of shadow fruit
> As body and soul begin to fall asunder.
> Second, the conscious impotence of rage
> At human folly, and the laceration
> Of laughter at what ceases to amuse.
> And last, the rending pain of re-enactment
> Of all that you have done, and been; the shame
> Of motives late revealed, and the awareness
> Of things ill done and done to others' harm
> Which once you took for exercise of virtue.
> Then fools' approval stings, and honour stains.
> From wrong to wrong the exasperated spirit
> Proceeds, unless restored by that refining fire
> Where you must move in measure, like a dancer.' (LG II. 76-93, 205)

These lines acquire even more significance due to "to set a crown upon your lifetime's effort" being another reference to Dante, in Virgil's last words to him at the end of their journey across hell and purgatory *(The Poems of T.S. Eliot,* 1023). As when Virgil leaves Dante, the ghost says goodbye to the lyrical persona of *Quartets*. When the ghost has disappeared, Eliot's poetic I assumes that the words were "a kind of valediction" (LG II. 95, 205), despite their dark imagery. The terrifying warning is thus the ghost's farewell gift to Eliot and his readers. Its powerful message is still one of hope. The terror is not to create despair but to encourage, to start "that refining fire" and teach the way to salvation.

Guilt is not explicit here, nor is it in most of the *Quartets*. Yet, the ghost's goodbye set within the "farewell" quartet of "Little Gidding" encompasses the same regret as that with which Akhmatova expressly fills her *Poem Without a Hero*. It is regret for past mistakes, a life lived wrongly, without profound aspiration for value and spiritual purity. Akhmatova's "To cheer myself up – / To cheer myself up like this, Only how did it come to pass / That I alone of them am still alive?"[2] (551) is reminiscent of "the laceration / Of laughter at what ceases to amuse". Hemschmeyer's translation does not transmit the original message, since the Russian expression that Akhmatova employs here is a common way of expressing the idea that if you do something, you should do it to the fullest. So when the poet talks about having fun, she implies that if she is to have fun, it must be with no

[2] In Russian: "Веселиться – так веселиться, / Только как же могло случиться, Что одна я из них жива?" (324)

regret or sadness. The line sounds hysterical as if coming from somebody who tries to convince oneself that from now on it is only fun, or, maybe, that they should at least act as people who are enjoying themselves usually do. Eliot's "From wrong to wrong the exasperated spirit / Proceeds" seems like a perfect depiction of the torment that Akhmatova's alter ego is to undergo in "The Year Nineteen Thirteen", fluttering in terror from one ghost of the wrongful past to another. What she does not find though is the reassurance that the compound ghost gifted to Eliot, when indicating that there is salvation.

The contrast between the two poems in their attitude towards regret is in line with the role of "what might have been" that each text projects. Akhmatova's evident and unfading concern with guilt and regret gives considerable presence to this potential past and even life in *Poem Without a Hero.* This parallel past world, although non-present, accompanies the poetic persona's path, always a reminder of itself and creating even more dimensions in the complexity of the time continuum. Eliot, however, despite having regrets and paying tribute to the notion as well, does not allow it to become as important as the actual past or present, in the way Akhmatova does. His potential past is also there, by his side, but if with Akhmatova it speaks, to Eliot it whispers.

6.2 The Masquerade of the Past in *Poem Without a Hero*

In Akhmatova's "The Year Nineteen Thirteen", ghosts are a recurrent motif. It has been noted that Part I is set in the Fountain House, on the eve of the year 1940. In the introductory remarks, Akhmatova observes that "Instead of the expected guest,

shades from the year 1913, under the guise of mummers, pay a visit to the author"[3] (549). The guests appear throughout the first part while Akhmatova plays host for them.

Masquerades were commonplace for Russia at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. In her book dedicated to this phenomenon, Colleen McQuillen demonstrates masquerades as one of the most prominent features of Russian Modernism although differing from the way they were seen before: "Whereas masked balls in the eighteenth century were occasions for anonymity and disguised identity, costume balls in the modernist era (1872-1914) gave full rein to creative personal expression" (*The Modernist Masquerade,* 3). Thus, the past which visits Akhmatova at the Fountain House materialises in the perfect form, in those costume balls of her youth.

In this connection, McQuillen makes an interesting comment referring to the masquerade in *Poem Without a Hero* as the literary trope which became a point of reference for another Modernist poet and essayist, Vyacheslav Ivanov. The latter was known for his gatherings of guests in disguise as well as for various essays dedicated to masquerade as a complex and indeed transcendent event. Based on the work of the two Modernists, the scholar comes to the concept of *philological masquerade*: "the gathering of figures wearing costumes that evoke established cultural archetypes and historical heroes constituted what I call a philological masquerade, which has a syncretic chronotope that unites all epochs and nations"

[3] In Russian: "К автору вместо того, кого ждали, приходят тени из тринадцатого года под видом ряженых" (322)

(209). The notion is relevant for it adds yet another dimension to the masquerade from Akhmatova's poem. The guests that first seemed a "midnight Hoffmania", random and somewhat frightening visitors from another time and space, become Akhmatova's own acquaintances who constituted her life in Tsarist Russia. At the end, they appeared a testimony to the perplexity yet integrity of the world shining brightly in the poetic persona's hall with millions of stories, past and present, real and fictional.

6.2.1 The Unwelcome Guests

The masquerade of Akhmatova's past starts with the materialisation of the guests that she did not invite or expect to see:

> This one is Faust, that one Don Juan,
> Dapertutto, Jokanaan,
> And the most modest one – the northern Glahn,
> Or the murderer Dorian Gray (550)[4]

Her guests first appear as some of the most emblematic characters in historyю We see there Faust, the man whose search for knowledge provoked his pact with Devil. Originating in Medieval Germany, Faust's legend is one of the most frequent references in Western culture, including Christopher Marlowe's *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus* (c.1604), Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Faust* (1808), Thomas Mann's *Doctor Faustus* (1947), and Mikhail Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita* (1940). Although Faust's character and destiny change throughout

[4] In Russian: Этот Фаустом, тотДон-Жуаном,
Дапертутто, Иоканааном,
Самый скромный – северным Гланом,
Иль убийцею Дорианом (323)

history, his name is traditionally associated with the quest for knowledge, the conflict between one's ambition and moral integrity.

Next appears Don Juan, a legendary libertine and also a source of inspiration for numerous artworks. Arguably the first written version that portrays Don Juan belongs to Tirso de Molina (*The Trickster of Seville and the Stone Guest*, c.1630). This representation of Don Juan was followed by Molière's *Don Juan ou le Festin de pierre* (1665), Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *Don Giovanni* (1787), and Alexander Pushkin's *Stone Guest* (1830). In every story in which Don Juan appears, he symbolises lust and cruelty.

The name of Dapertutto, Akhmatova's following guest, is not as known as Faust's or Don Juan's. Dapertutto is a character from Jacques Offenbach's opera *The Tales of Hoffmann* (1881). The opera is based on Hoffmann's short stories and biography. Dapertutto appears as Hoffman's mysterious and vicious antagonist. Manipulating others, Dapertutto pursues his goal, which is to obtain Hoffmann's shadow. With his malicious manipulations, Dapertutto comes to represent the forces that haunt poets in a useless attempt to possess and tame the poets' talent, forcing it to serve such "Dapertuttos".

Casanova also visits Akhmatova. One more libertine, Casanova is often compared to Don Juan. Unlike him, though, Casanova is praised for his literary works, which provide contemporary readers with a unique depiction of European society in the eighteenth century. Despite his contribution to sciences and arts, he became most known for his multiple affairs with women, which made his name synonymous with "womaniser".

The list of morbid charmers goes on with Dorian Gray. The character of Oscar Wilde's novel (1890), Gray is an astonishingly handsome youth, a hedonist who seeks pleasure in life. Like Faust, Gray is so determined in his pursuit that he wishes to sell his soul in exchange for achieving his aim. His beauty is to remain unfaded; instead, his portrait ages and records all the sins that Gray has commited while enjoying his short-term permissiveness. Apart from embodying sin, Gray also emobies the notion of "art for art's sake", to which Akhmatova felt strongly opposed.

Jokaan, Saint John the Baptist, is seemingly out of place among the sinners. Considered a prophet by various religions, he is known as the one who baptised Jesus Christ, thus being one of the first to anticipate Christ's coming and his significance for humankind. According to the New Testament, John the Baptist was beheaded on Herod Antipas's order. In some versions, what caused the saint's death was Herod's daughter, Salome's unrequited desire for Jokaan.

Reading the visitors' familiar names, one cannot help but think of them as those characters that have become common names, while their true identity is very different. Akhmatova marks in her notes that Dapertutto was a pseudonym of Vsevolod Meyerhold (1874-1940), one of the brightest theatre directors of his time, an advocate for Symbolism in theatre, and a forerunner of modern acting. Don Juan is a frequent alter ego of Gumilev in Akhmatova's work. The rest of the guests are not identified by Akhmatova. However, there is no difficulty in establishing Faust as Vyacheslav Ivanov (1866-1949), a Symbolist poet who belonged to

Akhmatova's circle, for that was his nickname, whilst Jokaan represents Vladimir Shileiko, Akhmatova's second husband and another frequenter of "The Stray Dog".

Among the uninvited visitors, there are also Lots from Sodom, Aphrodites, and Helens. Almost all of the guests are commonly associated with lust and depravity, with the notable exception of "Sancho Panzas and Don Quixotes". Similar to Faust, Dapertutto, and Don Juan, these masquers are much more real and temporally close to Akhmatova then they seem to be. Boris Philippov calls them "fashionable" masks, as Don Juan is also the protagonist of the popular Meyerhold's interpretation of Molière's play, Jokanaan – a famous character of Richard Strauss's (1864-1949) opera, *Salome* (1905) but also Oscar Wilde's play with the same title (1891), and Glahn – from the pages of Knut Hasman's (1859-1952) novel *Pan* (1894), another favourite of Akhmatova's circle (*Poem Without a Hero*, 10). Apart from the adoration that Akhmatova's contemporaries felt for the three characters, they are also linked to the theme of destiny and the vengeance that destiny holds. Although different, the three destinies are filled with tragedy and end in death, yet all three could have finished happily if the protagonists had not allowed themselves to be engrossed in mere sensuality.

6.2.2 The Prince of Darkness

Among those visiting Akhmatova, there is also a very special guest, the Prince of Darkness:

> Be if mask, or skull, or countenance –
> There's an expression of evil pain

That only Goya dared convey.
Minion and mocker of us all –
Before him the most putrid sinner –
Is blessedness personified...[5] (551)

In her "Prose to the Poem", Akhmatova dedicates a section to him, avoiding any mention of the name of the person behind the image but does confirm that his true identity is not a secret "for those who know all the story of the year 1913"[6] (Ахматова *Сочинения в двух томах*, 357). Her contemporaries and friends, for instance, Lydia Chukovskaya, easily found a parallel between the visitor of the masquerade and the poet Mikhail Kuzmin (1872-1936), which she indicated in her diaries quoting directly from the *Poem* (Vol. 1, 327-328).

As Russian philologist Mikhail Karlin points out in his notes to the *Poem*, Akhmatova's and Kuzmin's relationship varied throughout their lives. They started quite amiably. Reeder specifies that Kuzmin wrote the introduction to Akhmatova's *Evening* (*Anna Akhmatova: Poet and Prophet*, 67) and also an essay in praise of clarity which had a noticeable impact on Acmeism (34). Despite such a cordial beginning, the poets' relationships deteriorated up to the point of open mutual aversion resulting in Kuzmin's remark about Akhmatova living as "a poor relative" in the Punins family (Ахматова *Сочинения в двух томах*, 434) and, in turn, Akhmatova's deeply hurt feelings were manifested in *Poem Without a Hero*.

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[5] In Russian: Маска это, череп, лицо ли –
Выражение злобной боли,
Что лишь Гойя смел передать.
Общий баловень и насмешник,
Перед ним самый смрадный грешник –
Воплощенная благодать... (324)

[6] My translation from Russian.

I suggest that Akhmatova consciously painted Kuzmin's image utterly black in order to avenge herself (prosaic as it is but it would not contradict her character) and also because she saw the lifestyle and values of Kuzmin as too common for her former circle. In "Prose about the Poem" she writes: "he is one of those, who are allowed to do anything they want. I will not list here, what he was allowed to do, but if I did so, it would make a modern reader's hair stand on end"[7] (Ахматова *Сочинения в двух томах*, 357). Whatever Kuzmin's actions may have been, they must have seemed appropriate to his milieu as Kuzmin was the life and soul of that circle. As an example, Elaine Feinstein describes his relations with, firstly, Sergey Sudeikin (1882-1946), Olga's husband, and through their family, with Vsevolod Kniazev, who is so relevant to the *Poem,* before Kniazev fell in love with Olga Sudeikina (*Anna of All the Russias,* 44-45). This sort of bohemian lifestyle was not uncommon for Akhmatova's acquaintances and may explain why she modelled the Devil's image on Mikhail Kuzmin. Reeder's *Anna Akhmatova: Poet and Prophet* supports such an assumption, noting that after Kniazev's suicide, his former lover behaved as though he was not affected by it at all, which provoked Akhmatova to accuse Kuzmin of indifference to Kniazev's tragic death (383).

Therefore, the Prince of Darkness of the *Poem* is someone of flesh and blood, who came to the poetic persona on the brink of a new epoch as a reminder of past sins, hers and of those that used to surround her in the 1910s. As much as Akhmatova reproached Kuzmin for betraying their friendship and artistic relationship, she could not deny that he was only a child of his times. Despite how

[7] My translation from Russian

different their destinies became, they both belonged to a generation of artists who were blinded with their own lives. In a way, Kuzmin represents that point in time when "what might have been" became "what will never be".

Eliot's compound ghost is similar and at the same time different from Akhmatova's Prince of Darkness. Both rise from the past and embody that past in the poems; both torment Eliot's and Akhmatova's poetic I. Most importantly, the "compound ghost" and the "Prince of Darkness" stand for a sense of commonly shared guilt and regret. The difference, though, is that while Eliot's ghost will disclose wisdom and bring reconciliation, Akhmatova's ghost is merciless and provides no guidance, only reproach.

The different attitude of Eliot's and Akhmatova's ghosts is consistent with the different atmosphere of the two poems. The ghosts visiting Akhmatova bring guilt and fear alongside nostalgia; some of them are the poetic persona's antagonists, some are sinners, yet there are some friends among them too. The ghost of Eliot is the ghost of his past, the past that guided and nurtured him. Akhmatova's ghosts are her people's past, the past they wrote together and whose horrors they would reap a decade later.

6.3 The Masquerade of *Poem Without a Hero* and the Invisible Presences of *Four Quartets*

With such a guest list of the ghosts of the past, the Fountain House transforms into a timeless space, in which centuries collapse together, and the fine line between the

real and fictional worlds vanishes. Visitors whose names are deeply rooted in the Western tradition and echo throughout it turn out to be the "shades" of Akhmatova's past.

There arises the question as to whether the past is really past if Akhmatova is to live what that past brought about. Furthermore, what she is to live now will soon become her future and that of her contemporaries. Those guests come to remind their host of her past mistakes which made her "what might have been" impossible and shaped the reality she was living, and this course of history that never existed is also present at the carnival since the people's past is also all the pasts they chose not to live.

Even though Eliot does not make use of masqueraders per se in *Four Quartets*, in his poem, there are some similar ghostly presences that appear in the garden of Burnt Norton. In the first movement, Eliot refers to some presences that remain invisible to us but who appear reflected in the pool:

> There they were, dignified, invisible,
> Moving without pressure, over the dead leaves,
> In the autumn heat, through the vibrant air…
> There they were as our guests, accepted and accepting.
>
> (BN I. 24-25,30, 179-180)

Thus, Eliot establishes a dualistic connection between those following him in his journey and those mysterious presences. We do not know much of them, only that they are there "behind us" and that there is a certain superiority in their manner of being; on the other hand, they are our guests, which puts us somewhat above them. Like the guests in the *Poem*, those in the *Quartets* are illusory, unnerving

because unknown and impossible to be perceived by our "common" senses, and they also bear a witness to how the world around us is so much more than we are able to perceive.

Furthermore, the masquerade of the *Poem* serves multiple purposes, one of which is to weave "what might have been" in the dimension of the text, for those shadows of the past as much as they shaped Akhmatova's present do not belong to it and thus are only visitors in this world, although significant and powerful. On some occasions, the potential past appears in a more subtle manner, for instance, one may remember Akhmatova's forced "To cheer myself up – / To cheer myself up like this, Only how did it come to pass / That I alone of them am still alive?" (551).

The differences between the two poems are significant. While Akhmatova dedicated the first part of her *Poem* to a terrifying and dark encounter with her past presented by former friends as some of the most sinister and ambivalent of personae in history, the guests in the *Quartets* do intrigue readers by how little we know about them. The whole scene taking place in what seems a magical rose garden appears to have no dark note in it. Perhaps, this could be the first hint at the difference in the tonality of the poems, for Eliot's verse will prove itself again and again as a poem of hope, whereas the lyrics of Akhmatova will focus on fault and responsibility without the promise of a "rose-garden" at the end.

6.4 The Guest from the Future

One clear exception from the ghosts that provoke the feeling of guilt and remorse in the *Poem* is Akhmatova's Guest from the Future, the character inspired by Sir Isaiah Berlin. Berlin was one of the main impulses for the poem and its central figures. He paid a visit to USSR in 1945-1946 as a British diplomat. During his stay, he was seen at Akhmatova's home several times. They shared mutual respect, and Akhmatova introduced him as a new character in her work. Nayman is certain that "the Guest from the Future" is linked to the lyrical cycles *Cinque* (1946) and *Sweetbrier in Blossom* (1964), apart from the third dedication of *Poem Without a Hero* and the Guest's role in the text of the *Poem* (*Remembering Anna Akhmatova,* 95).

The story of Akhmatova's and Berlin's relationship is full of unanswered questions and guesses, mainly due to the protagonists' discretion. The only thing that is easy to see is that their encounter shaped their lives afterwards, thought why exactly remains a question. Reeder portrays Berlin as "a penetrating mind" with "a keen perception of life" and "encyclopedic knowledge of world culture" (*Anna Akhmatova: Poet and Prophet,* 458-459), all of which can also be said about Akhmatova. Feinstein, on the other hand, suggests that "perhaps it was his admiration which excited her most" (*Anna of All the Russias,* 218). Berlin in his memoirs is quite reticent regarding the meeting, focusing on the subjects they discussed rather than the emotions provoked ("Vstrechi c Russkimi Pisateliami v 1945 y 1956 godah"). Akhmatova, as usual, avoids the subject completely, leaving no personal note on her acquaintance with Berlin.

Nonetheless, the strength of the two lyrical cycles that brought the topic of love back into Akhmatova's poetry creates curiosity as to why the time that she shared with Berlin was so significant. Especially striking is the dictum of *Sweetbrier in Blossom* (1964), supposedly written after the famous "non-meeting" of Akhmatova with Berlin. Her refusal to see him in 1956, when he was able to visit the USSR for the second and last time, can be explained by her fear for the fate of her son, who had just returned from the labour camps. Considering that the 1946 meeting very likely caused Lev's imprisonments in the first place, Akhmatova's decision looks reasonable and justified. However, Russian scholar Svetlana Kovalenko sees another motive behind the poet's decision. In her view, Akhmatova refused to see the man who had perplexed her emotions so powerfully yet left and eventually married a wealthy aristocrat, with whom he returned on his second visit (*Анна Ахматова,* 208). Although I find it plausible that Akhmatova's hurt feelings could have been a factor in her decision not to see Berlin, it is unlikely that they were the main reason. It is more logical to suggest that Akhmatova was, first of all, a mother desperately worried for her son.

Berlin became one of the protagonists of Akhmatova's latter poetry. Moreover, both the meeting and non-meeting with him are a significant part of *Poem*. The fact that the actual past goes hand in hand with the potential one is another reminder of the omnipresence and multidimensionality of time. For instance, in 1946 she writes a poem titled "In Reality" ("Наяву"), describing her encounter with Sir Isaiah Berlin:

> Away with time and away with space,
> I descried everything through the white night:
> The narcissus in crystal on your table,

And the blue smoke of a cigar,
And that mirror, where as in pure water,
You might be reflected right now.
Away with time and away with space...
But even you can't come to my aid.[8] (457)

The fragment is based on the contrast between the images of transience and those of perfection. The lines are filled with the feeling of being between two worlds, one trivial, where there is a table, a mirror, a vase, cigars, and one eternal, which defies our habitual idea of time and space, where eternity is seen as beyond both. What is disturbing about this captivating scene is the last line that gives a tragic tone to the whole text.

The same tragic tone is evident in the third dedication preceding *Poem Without a Hero:*

Long enough I have frozen in fear,
Better to summon a Bach Chaconne,
And behind it will enter a man,
He will not be a beloved husband to me
But what we accomplish, he and I,
Will disturb the Twentieth Century[9]. (547)

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[8] In Russian: И время прочь, и пространство прочь,
Я все разглядела сквозь белую ночь:
И нарцисс в хрустале у тебя на столе,
И сигары синий дымок,
И то зеркало, где, как в чистой воде,
Ты сейчас отразиться мог.
И время прочь, и пространство прочь...
Но и ты мне не можешь помочь. (269)

[9] In Russian: Полно мне леденеть от страха,
Лучше кликну Чакону Баха,
А за ней войдет человек...
Он не станет мне милым мужем,
Но мы с ним такое заслужим,
Что смутится Двадцатый Век. (321)

The portrayal that follows, coupled with reference to Arthur Lourié, depicts Berlin as a herald of destiny. Lourié appears in the image of "Bach Chaconne", as it was he who used to play this piece to Akhmatova (Ахматова, 433). Lourié and Akhmatova were lovers, and thanks to him, she moved into the Fountain House for the first time, but in 1912, he emigrated to Europe abandoning her. Berlin was not much different from Lourié as he also had an evident impact on Akhmatova and also failed to remain by her side.

Despite a tragic depiction of Berlin as another painful yet inevitable turn of her destiny, Akhmatova's "Long enough I have frozen in fear" highlights Berlin's vitality in P*oem Without a Hero*. In Russian, this line is much more assertive, as a self-addressed imperative to stop fearing. Berlin then is represented as one of the impulses in the poem, alongside Olga Sudeikina. Reappearing in every section of the poem, Berlin's image represents the democratic spirit of the West and embodies the hope that is almost invisible in *Poem Without a Hero,* a hope of a free world.

In the first chapter of "The Year Nineteen Thirteen", Akhmatova inserts lines that are marked in italics and have the sound of the remarks as if pronounced behind the scene of the masquerade. One of these fragments address the Guest from the Future:

> And reflected in all of the mirrors
> Is the man who didn't appear,
> Who could not get into the hall.
> He is no better than the others and no worse,
> But he doesn't waft on Lethe's chill,
> And his hand is warm.
> The guest from the future![10] (552)

[10] In Russian: И во всех зеркалах отразился

The striking contrast between Berlin and other ghosts of the *Poem* personifies the opposition of life and death, and that Berlin belongs to the future gives hope that past death will be defeated by future life.

The antagonism between the two is highlighted by the scene depicted in the whole of "The Year Nineteen Thirteen". The Guest from the Future is the only one with power to oppose the masquerade of past sins that have come to claim their due. Although Akhmatova's visitors are incorporeal, one feels trapped in the hall full of visions of the past, powerless because they belong to another world, yet at the same time unreachable. In this context, Berlin's image voices the lyrical persona's hope for salvation, for a future of life redeemed from the sins of the past.

The guest materialises again by the end of "Obverse":

> And then let an unknown man
> From some future century
> Stare at me audaciously,
> And give me, a fleeting shade,
> An armful of wet lilacs
> Just as the thunderstorm passes away.[11] (571)

> Человек, что не появился
> И проникнуть в тот зал не мог.
> Он не лучше других и не хуже.
> Но не веет летейской стужей,
> И в руке его теплота.
> Гость из Будущего! (324-325)

[11] In Russian: И тогда из грядущего века
> Незнакомого человека
> Пусть посмотрят дерзко глаза,
> Чтобы он отлетающей тени
> Дал охапку мокрой сирени
> В час, как эта минет гроза. (340)

Hemschemeyer's translation differs from the original; in Russian, Akhmatova's lines are less personal as there is no literal indication that "a fleeting shade" is, in fact, the lyrical persona. However, the figure of "an unknown man from some future century" allows one to assume so. Readers notice that again this vision of the future is hopeful as he is to appear after the storm is gone and greet the shade with spring flowers, an echo of *The Waste Land* "You gave me hyacinths first a year ago /… / –Yet when we came back, late, from the Hyacinth garden, / Your arms full and your hair wet" (*The Poems of T.S. Eliot*, 56).

Berlin and his poetic double bring hope into the poem, being almost the only silver lining in the textual space overflowing with guilt for past sins. This hope is not linked to Berlin only but rather to all future readers of the *Poem*. The epigraph chosen by Akhmatova also implies that her body may be destroyed but not her poetic voice. Akhmatova's Guest from the Future is proof of it. What preserves her from vanishing is the memory that she is to keep for others hoping that they, in turn, will protect this memory As in *Four Quartets*, memory in the *Poem* brings salvation and freedom.

Chapter 7

The Use of Memory

7.1 Memory as the Cornerstone of *Poem Without a Hero* and *Four Quartets*

Memory serves as both foundation and theme of *Poem Without a Hero* and *Four Quartets.* From the beginning, Akhmatova links her *Poem* with her friends and fellow citizens, its first listeners. Throughout the text, memory is established as the foundation for a different future that people are capable of shaping.

Akhmatova, like her friends Mandelstam, Chukovskaya, Pasternak, believed that there is responsibility that comes with memory. In a totalitarian regime which is directed against the individual, memory is above all a repository of the values that sustain human dignity and the preservation of life and a bulwark of enduring spiritual values. "The Year Nineteen Thirteen" is filled with images of the past. The masquerade witnessed by the poet appears as a reminder of the sins of her generation, which induce a terrible turn in history, the October Revolution, and millions of people who pay for those sins:

> Whose turn is it now to blench with
> Fear, back away, surrender,
> Ask mercy for an ancient sin?[1] (106)

Eliot also reminds us that it is essential to remember our past. Remembering our roots is the only way to understand ourselves, otherwise, we are not capable of

[1] In Russian: И чья очередь испугаться,
Отшатнуться, отпрянуть, сдаться,
И замаливать давний грех? (303)

collecting all the elements of the puzzle of reality: "Only through time the time is conquered" (LG II. 43, 181). Here, Eliot points to the necessity for people to remember their past, as there is no present or future, without a past. People must always be conscious of the constant presence of what has passed. The use of the definite article seems to be of importance too, as it is "the time" that we shall conquer through "time". Such a phrasing implies that we are dealing with two kinds of time – human time and eternal time. Eliot restates Aristotle's belief that our individual achievement is a contribution to that of all men.

Such significance of memory is consonant with Aristotle's *Metaphysics.* At the beginning of the work, he points out:

> All men by nature desire to know. An indication of this is the delight we take in our senses; for even apart from their usefulness they are loved for themselves; the animals other than man live by appearances and memories, and have but little of connected experience; but the human race lives by art and reasonings. Now from memory experience is produced in men. Now art arises from many notions gained by experience, one universal judgement about a class of objects is produced. (*The Basic Works,* 689)

Aristotle highlights that the difference between animals and humans is experience and the ability to appreciate it. Unlike animals, human beings are endowed with an ability to see beyond mere experience and judge things abstractly.

Philosophy and art are based on what we have learnt from the past and require analysis and reflection. Evidently, the ability to evaluate the past is essential to our ability to be human and distinguish ourselves from animals ruled by instinct and living for the moment. Aristotle avers that for people to endure in time, they need a memory of the past.

In "Little Gidding" Eliot affirms: "This is the use of memory – / For liberation" (LG III. 7-8, 206). For Akhmatova, the past is a signifier of guilt and responsibility, and similarly, Eliot is concerned with past sins. For instance:

> The dove descending breaks the air
> With flame of incandescent terror
> Of which the tongues declare
> The one discharge from sin and error. (LG IV. 1-4, 207)

However, in this very image of punishment for past "sin[s] and error[s]", Eliot also enacts its atoning power. Moreover, he insists on the necessity to be receptive to the present moment, since: "...last year's words belong to last year's language / And next year's words await another voice" (LG II. 65-66, 204). The process of never-ending renewal of everything in the world requires preparation for the always-changing surroundings. There is a demand for balance between worshipping the past and adapting to the present, for if past, present and future are one, they are also equally important.

According to Paul Ricoeur's *Memory, History, Forgetting*, what we as readers of the poems deal with is two types of memory, "the present representation of an absent thing" and memory as "the representation of a thing formerly perceived, acquired, or learned" (7). The fundamental difference between the two lies in the exclusion of imagination in the former and its inclusion in the latter. The distinction is vital for one either assumes the direct link between our memory of a thing and the thing itself or admits the interference of our consciousness into the process of remembering. According to the second assumption, memory is a partly creative process influenced by our imagination, and therefore it lacks objectivity.

When discussing the significance of memory, Ricoeur refers to Henri Bergson as a pioneer who opened up a new understanding of memory. Bergson had expressed a particular interest in this notion since his first works on philosophy, in which he refers to the human subconscious. For instance, he was one of the first to discuss several types of memory instead of seeing memory as a uniform notion. He was convinced that memory is a self-reliant form of perception. As Keith Ansell-Pearson notes in "Bergson and Memory", "both Bergson and Freud are committed to the view that a radical division must be made between memory and perception" (62). Bergson's theory of memory is closely linked to the belief that we perceive the world in images. He holds that "there is no perception which is not full of memories" (24). The assertion appears consistent with Bergsonian duration, for it merges past, present and future in one existence, perception and recollection go hand in hand, and our perception of the world is both determined by and imbued with memory.

7.2 Creative Memory in *Poem Without a Hero*

Bergson was the first to point out the difference between two types of memory, one being "a habit" and the other – pure memory. The difference between the two is that habit memories are acquired through mechanical repetition of an action whereas pure memory is equal to personal recollections, hence it is unique to each mind. Memory ties moments of time into duration, thus freeing us from a merely mechanistic existence of seconds and minutes. Therefore, one of the most influential achievements of Henri Bergson consists in his contention "that our

experience does not merely consist of material phenomena" (Scaff *The Philosophy of T.S. Eliot,* 24), which he proves by including intuition into cognitive processes and by bringing scattered pieces of being into one cohesive duration. Later, Ricoeur will draw a curious conclusion based on the contrast between the two types of memories: "to memory that repeats is opposed memory that imagines" (*Memory, History, Forgetting*, 25).

Memory empowered by imagination is the memory that revives in Akhmatova's mind the night that her *Poem* came to her for the first time and reminds her of all those that read, listened to, and recited from memory the first drafts of the triptych. It is this memory that brings back from the past the faces and voices of old friends, which interlace with their artistic images and fictional doubles. This memory reconstructs for Akhmatova the landmarks of her childhood and youth, shaken by wars and the Revolution alongside more recent experiences, such as loss of her friends and family in communist prisons.

In her voyage through the "dark waters" of the past[2], Akhmatova does not stand still. She interacts with her memories, rethinks and rebuilds them turning them into a path away from the endless repetition of the same lessons of history. This is evident from several propositions.

The fashion in which the poet reconstructs the incidents of her biography is not linear. Masquerades of the 1910s are interrupted by the echoes of battles of 1905 so as to be followed by the terrors of the 1930s-1940s. The final note of the

[2] See Chapter 5

Poem is the clearest example of the opposition between memory that repeats and memory that imagines is particularly clear in final lines of the *Poem*.[3] These lines, as elsewhere in Akhmatova's text when she refers to memory, are filled with self-reflection. Her poetic mind does not annotate her past but strives to find truth in history and memory. Operating between documented historical facts and prophetic visions, memories found in the *Poem* show the true nature and purpose of remembering, which is to forestall repetition.

7.3 "Footfalls echo in the memory": Memory and Imagination in *Four Quartets*

The "memory that imagines" is also prioritised by the voices of the *Quartets*. In parallel to Akhmatova's seemingly random memory narrative, Eliot proposes a tortuous route for his recollections in terms of space as time. The route begins in Burnt Norton in 1934 (the encounter with Emily Hale), and it continues in East Coker filled with echoes of 1667 (Thomas Elyot's emigration) and with the voice of Mary Stuart ("In my end is my beginning") from the sixteenth century. Afterwards, readers reach American Dry Salvages and Eliot's adolescence, terminating their voyage in English Little Gidding with its ties to Eliot's visit in 1936 and to its role in the history of the Anglican Church and the English Civil War in the seventeenth century. This long journey in memory and history alternates with more precise memories, ranging from the poet's childhood, e.g. the rose garden and

[3] See Chapter 3.

the time he spent by the Dry Salvages, to World War II and the bombing of London, air raids, and the battle of the Atlantic.

The intersection between remembering and re-imagining is present in the *Quartets* from the first part, "Burnt Norton":

> Footfalls echo in the memory
> Down the passage which we did not take
> Towards the door we never opened
> Into the rose-garden. My words echo
> Thus, in your mind. (BN I. 11-14, 179)

The manner in which Eliot switches the common understanding of memory is noteworthy. On the contrary, in the meditation on the turning point (to which the first quartet is dedicated) Eliot employs memory within which are echoes of "what might have been". This unexpected turn adds another dimension both to the poem and to the concept of memory. If in Akhmatova's verse readers encounter memory that imagines independently from potential pasts, Eliot goes further in tying together memory and time and suggests that memory is affected not only by imagination but also by traces of the fantasies that never came into existence.

Throughout the *Quartets*, Eliot will emphasise more and more the liberating power of memory and hence history by which the latter may become the way to redemption instead of enchainment. In "East Coker", memory that simply reflects an experience is counter to knowledge, which assumes that whatever a person has learned from experience can be re-used in the future, but the problem is that life is constant change and it does not allow for limited and temporary certainties. Life remains unpredictable, there are no set answers. Existence poses a constant challenge to which we respond only by trying to understand its test, "for the pattern

is new in every moment / And every moment is a new and shocking valuation of all we have been" (EC II. 35-37, 187).

Eliot and Akhmatova believed that the attainment of humility is the ultimate sagacity. In "East Coker", Eliot declares: "The only wisdom we can hope to acquire / Is the wisdom of humility: humility is endless" (EC II. 47-48, 188). And Akhmatova echoes Eliot:

> And whose turn is it to be frightened,
> To flinch, to step back, to give in
> And ask for forgiveness for an old sin?[4] (550)

Calling for humility, both Akhmatova and Eliot remind their readers of fundamental Christian values and underline how destructive arrogance may be. Humility is thus an escape from what Underhill calls "the tyranny of selfhood" (*Mysticism*, 215), which only constrains an individual. Humility, on the other hand, is the surrender of self to a being full of meaning and value.

In exploring and expanding the significance of memory, the last quartet sums up motifs of the poem. "Little Gidding" offers a glimpse into ultimate awareness, bearing some resemblance to the enlightenment achieved in Dante's "Paradise", because in it too, no matter how varied, everything comes to one. This fragment is to crown Eliot's poetic "not hand-made monument"[5], to paraphrase Pushkin. This

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[4] In Russian: И чья очередь испугаться,
Отшатнуться, отпрянуть, сдаться
И замаливать давний грех? (323)

[5] A reference to one of the most known Pushkin's poems "My monument" (1836) and its first line "A monument not hand-made I have for me erected..." (*Poems by Alexander Pushkin*. Trans. by Paning, I. Boston: Cupples and Hurd, 1888).

moment of union is particularly evident in the way Eliot treats memory in the final fragment:

> ...This is the use of memory:
> For liberation – not less of love but expanding
> Of love beyond desire, and so liberation
> From the future as well as the past. (LG III. 7-10, 206)

There is considerable power in the word "memory" in this significant fragment. The only other time "memory" is addressed explicitly is in the first quartet and there, it is linked to "what might have been". Furthermore, only a few lines separate this aphorism from that on the potential of history to be either servitude or freedom.

7.4 Memory and Love

The link between memory and history is not two-sided but three-fold, for love is included in the solution to purgatorial existence. Importantly, complete freedom can be achieved and can set us free as from the mistakes and sins of the past and from the tortures and punishments of the future. What remains is a pure, true time with its countless facets of what was, might have been, has been, will be, will never be. Therefore, polyhedral, essential for living, enriched in meaning, memory that imagines merges with love. Yet this is not the love of romantic poems but mystical love, a love that has reached purity and freedom from attachments. It is this love that Eliot defines so precisely in "East Coker": "Love is most nearly itself / When here and now cease to matter." (EC V. 29-30, 191). This is the equivalent of "the

awful daring of a moment's surrender" of *The Waste Land* (*The Poems of T.S. Eliot*, 70).

Even before the *Quartets*, Eliot felt spiritually determined to express his religious beliefs in poetry, and as a Christian, he hoped to reach paradise. "Our peace in His will / And even among these rocks" of *Ash-Wednesday* (97) echo "We build the meaning: A Church for all" from *Choruses from The Rock* (157). Both fragments alongside the play *Murder in the Cathedral* were the roots of the *Quartets*. To quote Schuchard, "it takes all four quartets to conclude *Ash-Wednesday*, end the exile's journey in "the crowned knot of fire". *Four Quartets*, too, constitute a great love poem, of human love lived beyond desire. (*Eliot's Dark Angel*).

Akhmatova, on the other hand, did not feel so optimistic as to turn what was to become "The Human Tragedy", a replica to Dante's *The Divine Comedy*, into a poem of love and hope. Drama is evident throughout her verse and scarcely any hope. That is not to say that Akhmatova gave up, on the contrary, her text is intended as a call for endurance. Yet, her *Poem* maintains a dark tone and is steeped in "the terror of history". Love, nonetheless, is not absent in the *Poem*, though it is much more subtle than in Eliot. The most significant reference is found in the last section:

> Everything recounted in Part One
> About love, betrayal and passion,
> Free verse flung from its wings,
> And my city stands, mended[6] (575)

[6] In Russian: Все, что сказано в Первой части
О любви, измене и страсти,
Сбросил с крыльев свободный стих,

The lines, though, are ambiguous. The connection between Part One and "love, betrayal and passion" is unexpected, when considering the masquerade full of sinners, and although betrayal and passion are easy to attribute to such a category of characters, love seems out of place here, despite the fact that some of those sinners were very dear for Akhmatova, for instance, her friend, Olga Sudeikina, and her first husband, Nikolai Gumilev.

Akhmatova's famous free verse liberates itself from all three "love, betrayal and passion", as if becoming the poetic persona's "wings", as she is ready to accept her past and, thus, reconstruct her present and future. She finds her freedom not in love but once love is gone. What first seems to contradict the message behind everything she has been saying so far is easier to perceive when remembering that the fourth section of Part One includes an exclamation "God forgive you!"[7] (564). It refers to the poet who took his own life, which reminds us of indiscriminate Christian forgiveness originating from the love that Eliot advocates.

That brings me to the conclusion that as Eliot finds a liberating power in dividing earthly desire and spiritual love, Akhmatova sees her freedom in opposing the love of her youth, the love for men and friends, and derives her strength in faith and love in its Christian understanding. Whether due to her experience or personality, she remains faithful to the tragic tone of the text, as if its purpose is to serve as a mirror to people and reflect the horrors of their deeds.

И стоит мой Город "зашитый" (343)

[7] In Russian: "Да простит тебя Бог!" (334)

7.5 Individual and Collective Memory

As different as the tones of the verses are, Eliot's and Akhmatova's views on memory have a lot in common. Although the two poets do not make a clear distinction between memory being collective or individual, the nuances of such opposition are present in both works. The suggestion most exemplified in both the *Quartets* and the *Poem*, whose voices are mainly first-person, is that individual memory is part of collective memory. Akhmatova and Eliot do not name "collective memory" but they share the belief that individuals need to share an awareness of the present and the past and of a common tradition so as to gain their freedom from enchainment in time.

The two direct uses of the word "memory" in *Four Quartets* imply memory being both individual and collective. The first mentioning of memory, in "Burnt Norton", is followed by an affirmation "My words echo / Thus, in your mind" (BN I. 13-14, 179). This could be taken as a physical echo, as is the case for music, which is utterly important for the lyrics. This echo, like music, reverberates in our mind even after the piece is ended. The lines also imply the continuity of human memory as our heritage that comprises one's personal experience but also memories of generations.

The reference in "Little Gidding" to this notion is even more vital for finding freedom in memory. It is this memory that expands "of love beyond desire" and witnesses how "now they vanish, / The faces and places, with the self which, as it could, loved them, / To become renewed, transfigured, in another pattern" (LG III.

14-16, 206). Thus, it is a collective "they" that endure in time and become present through us.

Eliot also asserts that "we die with the dying [...] we are born with the dead" (LG V. 15-17, 208), reassuring the validity of a past or collective experience whose meaning is not lost but reactualised across time in our individual consciousness. At the end of the text, the poet uses only "we" to refer to the human condition in general.

The same importance to "we" is evident in the lesson given by the compound ghost to the poetic persona of the *Quartets,* discussed in Chapter six. The ghost's final words only employ plural "we" and "they" and speak of "these men", "those who opposed them", "the fortunate", "the defeated". The lines revolve around the wisdom that we are to attain together, as a whole:

> Whatever we inherit from the fortunate
> We have taken from the defeated
> What they had to leave us—a symbol:
> A symbol perfected in death. (LG III. 43-46)

While Eliot refers to the memory of a past collective experience, in this case, the English Civil War, Akhmatova enhances the concept even further. For her the very composition process of the poem is a collective enterprise. Her "Foreword" is both a personal statement expressed in a first person as well as a homage to all those who helped her memorise the poem or simply had the courage to listen to it and thus contributed collectively to its creation: "I hear their voices and remember them when I read the poem aloud, and for me this invisible chorus is an everlasting

justification of the work"[8] (543). Moreover, these lines suggest the belief in something greater and which goes beyond the individual, analogous to Eliot's concept of "tradition". Nayman remembers how Akhmatova used to write poetry, it seemed that she did not write poetry but "wrote poetry down" (*Remembering Anna Akhmatova*, 148), suggesting, she did not start from scratch when creating a poem but remembered it and simply put it on paper.

In her conversations with Chukovskaya, Akhmatova once noted that she always wrote her own poetry but that the *Poem* was different, for it was written "in chorus, together with others, thanks to others' hints"[9] (*Записки об Анне Ахматовой*, Том 2, 172). The declaration of Akhmatova's modest role in the creation of the text ("this poem came to me") is followed by the dedication of the poem to those who first listened to it in Leningrad, and their choir justified for Akhmatova the writing of *Poem Without a Hero*. Throughout her creative career, she strove to be the voice of many (as she claimed herself in *The Requiem*, mentioned in Chapter 1).

Collective memory in the *Poem* serves as a testimony to the real history. This finds its brightest image in Part Three of the *Poem:*

> I called out to a distant echo,
> Stirring, with my inappropriate laughter,
> The deep sleep of things...[10] (573)

[8] In Russian: Их голоса я слышу и вспоминаю их, когда читаю поэму вслух, и этот тайный хор стал для меня навсегда оправданием этой вещи. (320)

[9] My translation from Russian.

[10] In Russian: Я аукалась с дальним эхом,
Неуместным смущая смехом
Непробудную сонь вещей (342)

These lines from "Epilogue" address a metaphor which opened this chapter, "footfalls echo in memory / down the passage which we did not take" (BN I. 11-12, 179). Unlike Eliot, Akhmatova fixes the rooms of the Fountain House, which is the setting for "the deep sleep of things", within the realm of the past. This past tells her of her future full of misery; thus, time is unified in one. Later, Akhmatova's echoing her half-forgotten past creates another vision of "what might have been", this time focused on the possible destiny of her "double [who] goes to prison". Unsurprisingly, the vision is not optimistic, for it predicts that if Lev Gumilev had not been taken away from Akhmatova, she would have faced the charges herself.

The echoing of the past and "what might have been" of the poet's double finishes with another vision, the above-mentioned "Russia fleeing to the east" (576). Its significance in the development of the motif of collective memory in the text can hardly be overestimated, for just as the image represents a personified country, it also betokens the unified consciousness of the people who form that country. The mentioning of Russia "recognizing the hour of vengeance" clarifies that collective consciousness here is actually collective memory. After all, what is vengeance if not an active force produced by the constant remembering and reviving of the past, a manifestation of how through memory, past lives in the present while shaping the future.

Commenting on the last lines of the poem, Nancy Anderson notes a drastic difference between "Petersburg" of 1913 in Part One and Russia of 1941 in "Epilogue":

> Artistic Petersburg has become so corrupted, so demonic, that it no longer acknowledges the concept of guilt. It cannot repent, and thus cannot be saved. By contrast, Akhmatova's Russia acknowledges the national guilt toward the dead and accepts the ordeal of wartime in a spirit of penance.
> (*Anna Akhmatova. The Word That Causes Death's Defeat,* 230)

Thus, the only hope of Russia to attain redemption, to put an end to suffering lies in universal repentance since there is no sacrificial god to atone for one's sins. The salvation of people is in their hands and in their memory. The ending of the *Poem* is reminiscent of Movement I of the last quartet:

> And what the dead had no speech for, when living,
> They can tell you, being dead: the communication
> Of the dead is tongued with fire beyond the language of the living.
> (LG I. 49-53, 202)

Here Eliot refers to the English Civil War in the seventeenth century, which brings his poem even closer to Akhmatova's. Read against her lines, these verses encompass the same idea of continuity of a shared memory. Even more so, Eliot prioritises the language of the dead which transmits wisdom to the living. "Tongued with fire" is invested with the knowledge of experience that is not accessible for those trapped in time. Furthermore, the plural "they" is indicative of the collectivity of the dead as opposed to the collectivity of the living. Thus, a universal effort of all humans present here and now would not be enough to rival such an effort of all those no longer alive.

The feeling of the strength of all those deceased generations is yet more powerful in Akhmatova due to her personal connection to so many of them. If Eliot refers to "the dead" as a category, she actually personifies those dead in Part One, and speaking of the living, she employs "Russia". These choices are consistent with

the general tone of both poems, for when Eliot adopts a more general discourse (even when speaking of his own experience, he avoids names), Akhmatova grounds her text on the personal.

What is important here is that past sacrifices and endeavours are not irrevocably lost but passed on to the living as a common heritage and in this way destiny and the devouring nature of time is defeated. "Whatever we inherit from the fortunate / We have taken from the defeated" (LG III. 43-44, 207).

While discussing the way in which both Eliot and Akhmatova have turned personal history into universal history, it has been argued that they intend to inscribe individual experience in universality; and the personal becomes exemplary of collective memory. As "The Foreword" implies, the text that we are about to read is filled with Akhmatova's experiences and fragments of her past but it is also the experience and the past *of* many other people and a past lived *together with* many others.

"The Year Nineteen Thirteen" and its masquerade raises the question of personal responsibility, which so many of Akhmatova's contemporaries were unwilling to embrace. She agrees to take on "the role of the fatal chorus" (559). In the half-dreamy revival of the reeling atmosphere of her youth, Akhmatova appeals to memory as the main source of confronting her past, no matter how afraid or ashamed of it she may feel.

"Obverse" seemingly has little relation to the topic, as it starts as a dialogue with an editor and transforms into an inter-spatial and -temporal discussion. But a

close reading of the poem reveals that collective memory also appears at the core of the second part:

> Ask my contemporaries –
> Convicts, hundred-and-fivers, prisoners –
> And we will tell you
> How we lived in unconscious fear,
> How we raised children for the executioner,
> For prison and for the torture chamber.[11] (582)

Referring to those who shared with her the terrors of the communist state, Akhmatova defines them all as "convicts, hundred-and-fivers, prisoners". The reality of the USSR was such that almost all who remained at liberty must have committed crimes in support of the new regime, while those behind bars were often the most honest. "Hundred-and-fivers" is the name given to people who were sent out of Moscow and Leningrad and were not allowed to settle anywhere closer than 105 kms from the cities.

These lines are some of the most dramatic in the *Poem*. In some editions, Akhmatova did not include them in the main body of the text. Interestingly, the two stanzas that were omitted from those editions (as, for example, is the case of Hemschemeyer's translation) address the topic of "we" as opposed to the prevailing "I" of "Obverse". Besides, both are dedicated to the pain of thousands of mothers, who like Akhmatova were forced into despair by Stalin and his henchmen; yet this

[11] In Russian: Ты спроси моих современниц,
Каторжанок, «стопятниц», пленниц,
И тебе порасскажем мы,
Как в беспамятном жили страхе,
Как растили детей для плахи,
Для застенка и для тюрьмы (338)

despair becomes universal in being familiar to any mother who sees her children and family suffer.

7.6 Memory and Two Kinds of Forgetting in *Four Quartets*

The power of memory is also linked to two other notions, namely forgetting and forgiving. What is more, Eliot differentiates between two types of forgetting. One of them is the forgetting which is treacherous to memory and history. All in all, "a people without history / Is not redeemed from time" (LG V. 20-21, 208). Obviously, what is implied in the lines is the memory of history rather than history itself, for history is always with us, whether we are aware it or not, but it is memory that provides us with the capacity consciously to define our destiny. By the same token, forgetting is our worst enemy. In the battle against it, we shall find ourselves by "the unknown, remembered gate" (LG V. 30, 208), which should not by now be confusing to the readers. Having learnt the mystical way and embraced the flow of things, the readers are prepared to discover this brave new world. All that is required from suffering humanity is to remember, forgive, and love.

In the first three quartets, the references to failing to remember are surprisingly scarce in comparison to the fourth quartet, and appear to represent passivity rather than action, for instance, "long forgotten wars" (BN II. 5, 180) or "the brown god is almost forgotten" (DS I. 6, 193). When it does become active, for example, in "The Dry Salvages", "reminder / of what men choose to forget" (DS I. 8-9, 193), it is to admonish those who refuse to remember.

According to Ricoeur, forgetting can be seen as a problem of memory and the lack of faithfulness to it, whereas forgiveness assumes the opposite and also implies "reconciliation with the past" (*History, Memory, Forgetting,* 88). What is particularly relevant in Ricoeur's argument is his inclusion of the notion of love in the topic as he draws a parallel between all-excusing love and forgiveness that extends even to the unforgivable.

The last suggestion is reminiscent of Eliot's lines quoted in the preceding pages, notably: "This is the use of memory: / For liberation – not less of love but expanding / Of love beyond desire" (LG III. 7-9, 206). Thus, for Eliot, as for Ricoeur, selfless love and memory embody the foundation of a truer world. Such a belief is consistent with the mystical way, which was described by Underhill and became one of the inspirations for the poem. Like a mystic, the poetic persona of the *Quartets* strives for true love found in forgiveness and self-rejection.

These quoted lines form part of "Little Gidding" and highlight the general idea behind it. If the theme of forgetting naturally accompanies the discussion of memory throughout the text, it is to culminate in "Little Gidding" side by side with a newly introduced notion of forgiveness. While the other three quartets dwell on the role of history and memory alongside spirituality and the moments of illumination for discovering the path to truth, the last section is to lead us to truth through the duality of forgetting and forgiving.

The tone of "Little Gidding" regarding memory is unlike the rest of the text. To begin with, the interplay between forgetting and remembering is depicted in subtle semitones. As the poem concludes with moments of illumination, those

instants of perceiving truth, *Four Quartets* advances through stages of oppositions: pole and tropic, melting and freezing, attachment and detachment all become the opposites which Eliot wants us reconcile in time and space.

The explicit references to forgetting establish the value of time and our memory of it. The antagonist to the mission of remembering and memorising is of little interest to Eliot or Akhmatova, and the point at which Eliot decides to turn to it is in the final quartet. Here forgetting appears the rightful nature of the space "in-between" that readers are to discover, for, as Eliot puts it, "You are not here to verify, / Instruct yourself, or inform curiosity, / or carry report" (LG I. 43-45, 202). This recalls Underhill's assertion that "where the philosopher guesses and argues, the mystic lives and looks" (*Mysticism*, 23). Echoing the suggested conflict between the rational and the spiritual, the poem indicates that patterns of behaviour, evaluation, and mentality change constantly. That means that in each given situation, one is to remember the experiences of the past as well as to let them go and perceive the new situation as truly new, unknown.

In this sense, forgetting (but not oblivion) allows us to learn how to be ignorant while knowledgeable, without which we are bound to fail in the face of the everlasting flow of existence. This partial forgetting enabling an individual to create new patterns time after time is not a total failure to remember. Understood so, forgetting is reminiscent of Heidegger's view of it as a tool for living in what he calls temporality: "A specific kind of *forgetting* is essential for the temporality that constitutes being in relevance. In order to be able to really get to work, lost in the world of tools and to handle them, the self must forget itself" (*Being and Time*,

324). In the light of Heidegger's Da-sein and his being-towards-death, Eliot's forgetting synonymous with immersion in the moment also acquires the function of shaping the future.

The second movement of "Little Gidding", in particular, is centred around a mystical encounter with what Eliot calls "a familiar compound ghost", and the unexpected meeting is immersed in the poetic persona's attempts to recognise the ghost whom he "had known, forgotten, half recalled" (LG II. 40; 204). The ghost, who seems to be Eliot's double, but much less corporeal than that of Akhmatova's spectres, is to instruct his counterpart, lost in the in-between world about how one embraces the unbearable uncertainty of being:

> ...I am not eager to rehearse
> My thought and theory which you have forgotten.
> These things have served their purpose: let them be.
> So with your own, and pray they be forgiven
> By others, as I pray you to forgive both bad and good.
>
> (LG II. 58-63, 204)

What Eliot refers to here is not "forgetting" as the obliteration of the past, but as a means to facing the lessons of life, which are never stable, fixed. And the response to them is to be always new, for life is unpredictable and allows for few certainties. This ability to remember without being fixed in the past leads us to the uplifting finale of the quartet and, thus, the poem, "And all shall be well". Like Berdyaev, Eliot embraces the world both as a path to truth and as filled with sin and evil. As Eliot proposed earlier, the past is unredeemable, in the sense that there is no going back and rewriting history. In the active and creative memory of the past, though, there is the way to salvation, and this sort of memory is impossible without such a deeply Christian value as forgiveness.

Forgetting then is the force directed against life. The process of remembering promises to be painful, as Eliot warns his readers, since memory will revive shame and guilt, and forgetting will be there to tempt us with the apparent comfort of oblivion. So from our current purgatorial state, it seems we are to dig into the state of even more suffering, the difference being that this suffering itself will be purifying. This is stated throughout the poem and especially explicit in the lesson of compound ghost.

It begs a reminder that despite the presence of forgetting in *Four Quartets*, this presence is barely appreciable, which is symmetrical with *Poem Without a Hero*. As in the case of Eliot, Akhmatova's goal is to praise memory, no matter how painful it may be. For this reason, forgetting is always implied as the main adversary though rarely addressed explicitly, and even less so than in the *Quartets*. The most significant mention of it is found in "The Dry Salvages":

> … not forgetting
> Something that is probably quite ineffable:
> The backward look behind the assurance
> Of recorded history, the backward half-look
> Over the shoulder, towards the primitive terror (DS II. 51-55, 196).

The suggestion of a look "behind" instead of "at", especially in its link to "recorded history" is another argument in favour of Berdyaev's notion that history is an intersection of time and eternity. Although admitting the difficulty of the task, Eliot still insists on remembering the universally significant meaning of history. By the very act of looking backwards, calling for our memory, we would already achieve something almost "ineffable" and thus come closer to the union with the transcendent.

The idea and image are put forth in one of Akhmatova's most iconic poems, "Lot's Wife", written in 1924. It praises the woman's deadly decision to look back at Sodom, the city where she spent her childhood and bore her children, that is, at her motherland. The price for that look is her life as she is turned into a pillar of salt:

> Who will grieve for this woman? Does she not seem
> too insignificant for our concern?
> Yet in my heart I never will deny her,
> who suffered death because she chose to turn.[12]
> (*Poems of Akhmatova*, transl. by S. Kunitz, 77)

Despite the intensified dramatic tone of the Russian poem, Eliot's and Akhmatova's formulations are similar. The voice of the *Quartets* forces the individual to strive to remember the intersection of time and eternity. Akhmatova is convinced of the necessity of the effort. Both episodes connect the process of such remembering to fear but state its boundless significance.

7.7 Forgetting as a Failure to Remember in *Poem Without a Hero*

Akhmatova also mentions forgetting in *Poem Without a Hero* but in a different way than Eliot. In the middle of the half-dreamed masquerade, Akhmatova experiences one of her encounters with her doubles, this one being particularly reminiscent of

[12] In Russian: Кто женщину эту оплакивать будет?
Не меньшей ли мнится она из утрат?
Лишь сердце мое никогда не забудет
Отдавшую жизнь за единственный взгляд. (153)

the one I have discussed above. If Eliot's ghost may be seen as his younger self (the suggestion is made, for example, by Ricks), Akhmatova leaves no space for doubt: "I don't want to meet again / The woman I was then" (550). The reason for her unwillingness to discover herself in such a situation consists in her wish to move away from her former self, which, perhaps, was more superficial and self-centred than the Akhmatova who had endured the Revolution and the communist terror.

In this transformation, she appeals to the help of forgetting:

> I forgot your lessons,
> False prophets and rhetoricians!
> But you haven't forgotten me.[13] (551-552)

Akhmatova calls here for the power of forgetting so as to reject lessons of those whom she calls "false prophets and rhetoricians". In the original, though, instead of "rhetoricians", she uses a word which transliterates as "krasnobai". Hemschmeyer's translation is correct but does not transmit its derogatory connotation. Russian "krasnobai", is derived from two words, "krasnii" (literally, red) and "bait" (talk). Therefore, these rhetoricians, the same as "false prophets", are to mislead others. Furthermore, the root "red" allows for a link with the Red Army, the Bolsheviks and Communists. Akhmatova does not clarify who is behind these two images but as Part I recreates the atmosphere of her youth, "false prophets" and "krasnobai" appear as those numerous orators who prospered in the uncertainty of pre-revolutionary times and thrived on people's fear and ignorance.

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[13] In Russian: Я забыла ваши уроки,
Краснобаи и лжепророки! –
Но меня не забыли вы. (324)

Forgetting in these lines is not a crime against remembering but rather the means to leave the past and go forwards. The suggestion is that as the poetic persona is aware of the worthlessness of whatever "false prophets and rhetoricians" may aim at teaching, she consigns to oblivion everything she might have heard from them. Considering that she still calls their false teachings "lessons", it is likely that her rejection of them happened at some point later. This makes sense in the context of the poem, filled with guilt, of which Akhmatova feels herself no less a part than any of the guests visiting her in Part One. Unlike them, though, she did not attempt to escape the consequences of the actions of her generation, and therefore, she gained the power to distance herself from her flawed past. However, as we are reminded in the same lines, denying or forgetting one's past does not redeem it, and fallen into such self-deception, the self is condemned to repeat the same errors.

This type of forgetting is almost the only outspoken address of the notion in the *Poem*. The other cases are so implicit that they barely leave space for speculation, except the presupposition that as much as we intend to remember, the failure to do so always accompanies us.

* * *

To recapitulate, memory is seen by Akhmatova and Eliot as the chance of humankind to achieve redemption. History is the force that people tend to ignore, but it actively participates in shaping our lives, whether we are willing to

acknowledge it or not. The only way to understand and even tame this force is to remember it.

Thus, memory serves as a path to a history endowed with meaning. Memory is to teach us how to learn from history, and it is to preserve the lessons of the past. Very importantly, those lessons should not be transformed into canons, which happens too often. As Eliot states in "East Coker":

> There is, it seems to us,
> At best, only a limited value
> In the knowledge derived from experience.
> The knowledge imposes a pattern, and falsifies,
> For the pattern is new in every moment
> And every moment is a new and shocking
> Valuation of all we have been. We are only undeceived
> Of that which, deceiving, could no longer harm. (EC II. 31-38, 187)

We always need to remember how little we actually learn from an experience, due to the flaws in our memory and unwillingness to perceive every moment as the whole of history. The process of learning from history is endless as in each given moment both the experience of the past and the newness of a present experience are in co-operation.

Eliot and Akhmatova believe, though, that the self forgets the two altogether, as one either ignores the past completely or only focuses on one element of it, which consequently is adopted as a prescribed rule. In order to overcome this downward spiralling, the self has to remember history. Without memory, there is no history, no past and, hence, no future, and so "A people without history / Is not redeemed

from time" (LG V. 20-21, 208). Therefore, memory is the origin of history and the key to its understanding. As Berdyaev phrased this principle, "memory is the principle which conducts a constant battle against the mortal principle of time. It battles in the name of eternity against the mortal dominion of time" (*The Beginning and the End*, 73). As long as we are alive, death is wrong. As long as we remember, we are immortal. It is this perception of remembering that Eliot and Akhmatova express through the entirety of their poetic texts, the memory that is to transform the current historic servitude into historical freedom.

Chapter 8

Truth and Eternity

As Eliot and Akhmatova ceaselessly remind their readers, the overwhelming power of time is both terrifying and promising. The right use of its unexplored potential requires a profound understanding of the meaning of existence. When contemplating time as the path to truth and knowledge, *Poem Without a Hero* and *Four Quartets* underline its duality, namely, human and eternal. Time reflects the duality of existence, which, to use Plato's words, embrace both ideal and material realities. By seeing the trivial as a mere reflection of an idea, we approach the ideal, or truth.

The differentiation between human reality and eternity is the basis of Platonic idealism. At Harvard, Eliot took various courses on Plato, such as "History of Ancient Philosophy" in his first year and "Greek Philosophy" with Especial Reference to Plato in the fourth (Jain *T.S. Eliot and American Philosophy*, 253-255). Asher in *T.S. Eliot and Ideology* refers to Eliot as "a Christian Platonist", standing above the confusion provoked by contemporary events (84). Weitz also classifies Eliot's worldview as neo-Platonic, in which the Eternal is seen as a creative force. Akhmatova's admiration for Plato was much less obvious; perhaps, it is most explicit in the rather late collection of poems, *Secrets of the Craft*, dedicated to the mystery of art, seeking to answer the question of the source of a poem. As Reeder points out, the response mirrors Plato's theory of creation, seen as a form of possession, hence, a passive act of creation (*Anna Akhmatova: Poet and Prophet,* 446).

For Plato, apart from the world, to which we belong – that of objects – there is also an ideal dimension, the world of eternal essences, whereas the world we inhabit is only its imperfect. Plato believed that the human soul is capable of seeing the true world while retaining the memory of the ideal. However, it remains only a memory, a devious echo of truth.

8.1 The Duality of Time

The interaction between the two worlds is a constant factor in Akhmatova's *Poem*. This interplay is to be found in the unearthly masquerade that abruptly interrupts the lyrical persona's routine; it is in the dialogue between the poet and her editor, in which his superficial questions appear so out of place; and it is also in the opening lines of "The Epilogue":

> Under the roof of the Fountain House
> Where the evening languor wandered
> With a lantern and a bunch of keys –
> I called out to a distant echo,
> Stirring with my inappropriate laughter,
> The deep sleep of things, where,
> A witness to everything in the world,
> From dusk to dawn.
> The old maple looks into the room
> And foreseeing our separation,
> Stretches out to me, as if to help,
> Its desiccated black hand.[1] (573-574)

[1] In Russian: Так под кровлей Фонтанного Дома,
Где вечерняя бродит истома
С фонарем и связкой ключей, –
Я аукалась с дальним эхом,
Неуместным смущая смехом
Непробудную сонь вещей,
Где, свидетель всего на свете,
На закате и на рассвете
Смотрит в комнату старый клен,

Akhmatova here depicts a twofold picture, in which she does not separate eternal truth from our reality. There is an old tree that appears to have seen it all yet forms part of the ordinary reality, which surrounds us. The tree, this silent "witness to everything", embodies a transcendent truth witnessed in time and becomes a link between eternal truth and Eliot's "still point". It remains in the same place motionless throughout its existence. So for Akhmatova, truth, which is achievable only from the point of no motion and no time, is present in the human world and sometimes even "looks into our rooms". What is required from us is to look out for it.

For Eliot, the opposition of eternity and temporality is also of concern, most explicitly in the third quartet, "The Dry Salvages". Here Eliot distinguishes between earthly time as "the river is within us" and eternal time as "the sea is all about us" (DS I. 15, 193). Further on, he refers to "the tolling bell" that "measures time not our time" (DS I. 35-36, 194). The lines bear a resemblance to Akhmatova's "The real – not the calendar – / Twentieth Century draws near"[2] (562). Both poets, when introducing time that cannot be measured by human clocks, deploy a certain tragic tone. Eliot's "tolling bell" reminds us of death, from which we cannot escape and which marks a call to eternity, while Akhmatova's "real Twentieth Century" is to bring revolution, communism, and totalitarianism onto her homeland.

И, предвидя нашу разлуку.
Мне иссохшую черную руку,
Как за помощью тянет он. (328)

[2] In Russian: "Приближался не календарный – / Настоящий Двадцатый Век" (333)

The binary image of river / sea that polarises earthly and eternal time will sum up this contrast at the end "Little Gidding":

> At the source of the longest river
> The voice of the hidden waterfall
> And the children in the apple-tree
> Not known, because not looked for
> But heard, half-heard, in the stillness
> Between two waves of the sea. (LG V. 33-38, 209)

8.2 "Away with time and away with space": The Intersections of the Eternal and the Temporal

While recognising the opposition between eternity and temporality, Eliot and Akhmatova are concerned with the interplay between the two dimensions. In their poems, the eternal is always manifested in the temporal, so it is impossible to separate one from another.

Akhmatova, unlike Plato, sees the two worlds as co-existing and interacting, and not only within *Poem Without a Hero*. One may remember her poem "In Reality" dedicated to Isaiah Berlin:

> Away with time and away with space,
> I descried everything through the white night:
> The narcissus in crystal on your table,
> And the blue smoke of a cigar,
> And that mirror, where as in pure water,
> You might be reflected right now.
> Away with time and away with space...
> But even you can't come to my aid. (457)

The lines touch not only on the opposition of the ideal and the material but also the Platonic concept that our souls possess the memory of the truth. There is

also an evident kinship between Akhmatova and Berdyaev and their understanding of the relationship between memory and history. In *The Beginning and the End*, Berdyaev states that "memory does not restore the past as it was, it transforms that past, transforms it into something which is eternal" (212), and it is this fine line between the trivial and the eternal that Akhmatova expresses in hoping for a word capable of overcoming death and filling her life with meaning.

The tragic view of eternity, evident in "In Reality", is further explored in the *Poem*, where the eternal constantly reappears, as a reminder or a warning but in many cases as a dreadful prophecy. "The sound of the orchestra, as if from another world / (The shadow of something flashed somewhere)"[3] (557-558) accompanies a demonic vision of the past in "The Year Nineteen Thirteen". In "The Obverse", reincarnated Hecubas and Cassandras (the narrator among them) find themselves "on the other side of hell"[4]. However, eternity also may be welcoming as in the last fragment of the third chapter of "The Year Nineteen Thirteen":

> There beyond the island, beyond the garden,
> Won't our glances meet again,
> Our eyes as clear as before,
> Won't you say to me once more
> The word that conquers death
> And solves the riddle of my life?[5] (563)

[3] In Russian: Звук оркестра, как с того света / (Тень чего-то мелькнула где-то) (329)

[4] In Russian: "по ту сторону ада" (329)

[5] In Russian: Там за островом, там за садом
Разве мы не встретимся взглядом
Наших прежних ясных очей,
Разве ты мне не скажешь снова
Победившее смерть слово
И разгадку жизни моей? (333)

Eliot depicts the ideal and the material as closely connected yet very distant from each other. Their interrelationship is evident, for example, in these lines from "Burnt Norton":

> To be conscious is not to be in time
> But only in time can the moment in the rose-garden,
> The moment in the arbour where the rain beat,
> The moment in the draughty church at smokefall
> Be remembered; involved with past and future.
> Only through time time is conquered. (BN II. 38-43, 181)

The opposition of human and eternal time reaches here its apogee, as both are inseparable and equally valuable in the quest for freedom and truth. Like Akhmatova's tree in "Epilogue" that has seen true wisdom yet forms part of our reality, Eliot affirms that one is unthinkable without the other one.

On the other hand, he insists on the distinction between clock time and eternity, which is notably present in the famous passages from the second movement of "Little Gidding", related to Heraclitus's concept of flux. In the light of Plato's ideas these lines reveal the connection of the ideal and the material, in which a particular minute of everyday existence becomes a fundamental element of universal being. Unlike Akhmatova, Eliot does not characterise either time as tragic.

8.3 "I turn to stone, I freeze, I burn": Heraclitus's Unity of the Opposites

Heraclitus, in apparent contradiction to his vision of the universe as endless flux, where all things turn into something else, claims that "it is wise to agree that all

things are one" (*Early Greek Philosophy,* 50). Further, he illustrates the statement and equates dawn with dusk, a path up with a path down, which are all, in essence, the same. Heraclitus's definition of wisdom is "to grasp the knowledge of how all things are steered through all" (53). Thus, the opposition between the ever-altering universe and the universe where all things are one is not that contradictory after all. Due to the constant state of flux, everything in the world is connected to everything else, because a theoretical A at some point in world history has evolved from or will turn into everything else, from B to Z. So, even though in the current state of things it may seem that dawn and dusk are opposite to each other, they are in fact united through time, in which they are bound to be one. Therefore, the only wisdom we shall strive for is the revelation of the infinite interconnectedness of the world that never stays the same but is always in the phase of transfiguration.

Heraclitean perspective on the unity of the opposites is reflected, for instance, in the lines from the first part of *Poem Without a Hero,* in which the speaker associates herself with all four basic elements at once, as if uniting them within her own body: "And I break into a cold sweat, / I turn to stone, I freeze, I burn...."[6] (550). The translation is not quite accurate, for what Akhmatova writes is literally "And I break into a wet coldness", which is more in line with the rest of the phrase, for it brings together the opposites – one of the main principles of Heraclitus, and the whole fragment then acquires Heraclitean connotations.

Eliot explores the Heraclitean aphorism in more detail. The opening lines of "Burnt Norton" introduce us to this concept: "Time present and time past / Are both

[6] In Russian: "И я чувствую холод влажный, / Каменею, стыну, горю" (322)

perhaps present in time future" (BN I. 1-2, 179). By uniting the opposites, Eliot also brings together such poles of change as the beginning and the end. By doing so, he reaffirms the unity of all existence. This suggestion is stated in "Burnt Norton":

> Or say that the end precedes the beginning,
> And the end and the beginning were always there
> Before the beginning and after the end.
> And all is always now. BN (V. 10-13, 183)

Eliot reminds us of this concept again in the second quartet quoting from St. John of the Cross, a Spanish mystic of the sixteenth century: "And what you do not know is the only thing you know / And what you own is what you do not own / And where you are is where you are not" (EC III. 44-46, 18). The image reappears in the next part, "The Dry Salvages": "And the way up is the way down, the way forward is the way back" (DS III. 6, 197). In "The Dry Salvages", Eliot warns that "You are not the same people who left the station" (DS III. 16, 197), reminiscent of Heraclitus's claim that one cannot step twice into the same river. The connection is highlighted because, in this quartet, there are links to the element of water, and the quartet depicts a sea journey. The flux is even more evident in Movement II of "Little Gidding", where all four elements – earth, fire, air and water – are seen as the omnipresent foundations of the world. Thus, air is found in "ash on an old man's sleeve" (LG II. 4, 202), earth – "the parched eviscerate soil" (LG II. 13, 203), water and fire – as successors of "the town, the pasture and the weed" (LG II. 18, 203).

8.4 The "invisible chorus" and "the constitution of silence": Striving for Truth Together with the Others

Poem Without a Hero reflects Akhmatova's belief in a Christian society. Notoriously referred to as "half-nun", Akhmatova brings her faith into the text. One of the most intimidating realities of the new regime for her was the denial of God and Christian values. This is undoubtedly close to Eliot's vision. In their search for truth, Eliot and Akhmatova follow the way of believers, accepting torture and torment as purifying forces, overcoming the duality of the universe, and striving for eternal truth.

In their exploration of the eternal wisdom, Eliot and Akhmatova are influenced by Aristotle. Aristotle reminds us that the quest for truth is not about individual achievements but rather about what we attain as a whole. Our unbreakable link with time makes us temporal, vulnerable to changes. However, a much greater goal must be borne in mind, since:

> as human thought, or rather the thought of composite beings, is in a certain period of time (for it does not possess the good at this moment or at that, but its best, being something *different* from it, is attained only in a whole period of time), so throughout eternity is the thought which *itself* for its object (*The Basic Works*, 885).

The existence of every one of us brings us closer to the truth. Moreover, the existence of every one of us leaves traces behind, which compound eternity, despite the temporality of our presence. Aristotle reminds us of the humble yet essential mission each one of us has in this world – to contribute to the collective exploit of the search of truth.

This approach is in line with Akhmatova's insistence on the *Poem* belonging to many rather than only her, to which she refers in the "In Place of a Foreword. Chukovskaya recalls her saying "I have always written my poems myself. But Poem is different. I wrote it all in a chorus, together with others, on a tip-off (172).[7] As for the text of *Poem*, the motif of truth obtained collectively is particularly clear in "Obverse". In it, Akhmatova places herself among other mothers and wives, who underwent the same torment of the Soviet execution machine:

> Ask my contemporaries –
> Convicts, hundred-and-fivers, prisoners –
> And we will tell you
> How we lived in unconscious fear,
> How we raised children for the executioner,
> For prison and for the torture chamber.[8] (582)

Here Akhmatova refers to the truth that is to be preserved. She and her fellow countrymen and women are the bearers of the truth which cannot be forgotten. Authorities and contemporaries may try to silence it or erase it altogether, yet it does not belong to state archives. This truth reveals a crime against humanity, against everything that has been carefully carried through the centuries of history, and this truth can only be preserved by many.

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[7] My translation from Russian. In Russian: "Всегда я свои стихи писала сама. А вот «Поэма» иная. Я всю ее написала хором, вместе в другими, по подсказке." (172)

[8] In Russian: Ты спроси моих современниц,
Каторжанок, «стопятниц», пленниц,
И тебе порасскажем мы,
Как в беспамятном жили страхе,
Как растили детей для плахи,
Для застенка и для тюрьмы (338)

For Eliot, the self's quest for truth is the compendium of many individual endeavours. For one, unlike Akhmatova, he barely uses a singular personal pronoun but many plurals. As a result, the poem reads as underlining the idea that although individual achievement is worth a lot, it is not enough unless it becomes an achievement of many. Take for instance these lines from "Little Gidding":

> We cannot revive old factions
> We cannot restore old policies
> Or follow an antique drum.
> These men, and those who opposed them
> And those whom they opposed
> Accept the constitution of silence
> And are folded in a single party.
> Whatever we inherit from the fortunate
> We have taken from the defeated
> What they had to leave us – a symbol:
> A symbol perfected in death. (LG III 39-46)

The whole passage is about the collective due to the repeated usage of "they" and "we". By stating that the revival of "old factions" or "polices" is impossible, Eliot reaffirms the idea that has been expressed throughout the *Quartets*, that of the search for constant renewal and the futility of old patterns for new circumstances. That is why "the defeated" cannot leave us anything but a symbol of their experience, because any other form will be too firm and thus broken by the constant flux of life. So all the living and the dead, of whatever faction, are "to accept the constitution of silence", to reach the still point and have a glimpse into wisdom.

Nikolai Berdyaev's vision of time and eternity appears particularly relevant. Unlike ancient philosophers, for whom Berdyaev had great respect, he does not think that time is only an image of eternity, on the contrary, for him, time *is* eternity (*The Beginning and the End*, 207). Akhmatova and Eliot reflect a very similar perception of the duality of time. Whether introducing ghosts in their poems or

differentiating between eternal and human time, Eliot and Akhmatova tirelessly speak of interconnectedness as the primal, universal principle which is God. Events that never happen freely interfere with the routine of the lyrical personae of the poems, changes represent a higher order of things, and eternity shines through the triviality of human existence. The spherical rather than linear view on the world predominates in *Poem Without a Hero* and *Four Quartets*, illustrating the oneness of all existence. Existence can be perceived as a tightly woven system, and this knowledge is crucial in the human quest for freedom and unity.

Chapter 9

Freedom through Time

In *Poem Without a Hero* and *Four Quartets*, guilt and purifying mark the way to true freedom which can break the chains of time and history. The link between time and freedom is a fundamental concept of both poems

9.1 Freedom "From past and future" and "from behind barbed wire"

Freedom constitutes the aim of Eliot's and Akhmatova's texts. While their focus is on time as an unfathomable power that is constantly overlooked, yet the goal of man's life is to attain freedom:

> And right action is freedom
> From past and future also.
> For most of us, this is the aim
> Never here to be realised (DS V. 41-44, 200).

Akhmatova again resists directness, but the spirit of freedom is manifest in the *Poem* too. It is particularly evident in the last part concerning the destiny of Russia and man in time. In its current state, the country is a prison suffocating and agonising from its own actions:

> And from behind barbed wire,
> In the very heart of the taiga –
> I don't know which year –
> Having become a heap of "camp dust",
> Having become a terrifying fairy tale,
> My double goes to the interrogation.
> And then he returns from the interrogation.[1] (574)

[1] In Russian: А за проволокой колючей,
В самом сердце тайги дремучей –

Being a prisoner in her own country, Akhmatova could not openly speak of freedom and instead, addressed its opposite. By doing so, she turns freedom into an almost physically sensed absence, as unattainable for her as for everyone else around her. The existence that she witnesses and describes in the *Poem* is horrifying and meaningless; it is the ongoing torture of oscillating between "interrogations" if we do not learn to conquer time, to use Eliot's phrasing. Akhmatova's calls for freedom are never mentioned explicitly, she invokes freedom indirectly by referring to the opposite, imprisonment.

I contend that, in this intentional omission of the concept of liberty, Akhmatova echoes Berdyaev. For him, although freedom determines our existence, it is not a given, for "the human soul is an arena in which there takes place the interplay of freedom and necessity, the spiritual and the natural world" (*Freedom and the Spirit,* 123). In Akhmatova's poem, the terror of history turns freedom into a far-fetched condition.

Eliot is also more explicit in discussing how to conquer time through time. On various occasions, he refers his readers to the need to reject the self in all its representations, whether it is desire or being a slave to one's past:

> It seems, as one becomes older,
> That the past has another pattern, and ceases to be a mere sequence –
> Or even development: the latter a partial fallacy

> Я не знаю, который год –
> Ставший горстью лагерной пыли,
> Ставший сказкой из страшной были,
> Мой двойник на допрос идет.
> А потом он идет с допроса. (342)

> Encouraged by superficial notions of evolution,
> Which becomes, in the popular mind, a means of disowning the past.
> (DS II. 37-41, 196)

As is the whole of the movement II, this fragment is indicative of the vitality of revisiting one's past and constantly learning from it. Only through close examination can we grasp that those events of the past, which seemed sequential, are in fact a pulsating continuum. This continuum never ceases to exist, nor does it repeat itself. As in Heraclitus, time as the intersection of all being requires attention to its lessons and constant searching for new patterns. In this particular sense, Eliot's notion of time is similar to that of Bergson's: the past is not lost, it endures in the present and coexists with it.

9.2 Freedom and Christianity

Conceiving time as a means of self-liberation, Akhmatova and Eliot link time with the Christian understanding of the world and its history. By doing so, they unwittingly align themselves with Berdyaev's beliefs. Like the two poets, Berdyaev links three concepts — history, freedom, and Christianity. Freedom is the foundation of Berdyaev's beliefs. Even in religion, he valued independent thinking instead of blind adherence to dogma. He dedicated several books and essays to freedom, the most acclaimed is *Freedom and the Spirit*, published in 1927, the central idea of which espouses Berdyaev's view that freedom is the ultimate reality and precedes existence and even God. He holds that "God created the world out of nothing but it would be equally true to say that he created it out of freedom" (165).

Furthermore, Berdyaev holds that Christianity reveals the truth about our being and gives meaning to time and, consistently, history, for history is contained in time. Moreover, it is in time that we find the spiritual being that Berdyaev urges us to seek, for time embraces history which develops, moves forward and, finally, fulfils itself. Hence, "history is in truth the path to another world" (*The Meaning of History*, 197) because in history humankind accumulates experience, which has the power to teach us freedom and unite us with the spirit.

Christian philosophy and its quest for freedom constitutes major concern in *Four Quartets*. Eliot did not live under a totalitarian regime which may account for the reason why he seems more hopeful than Akhmatova. His first quartet revolves around two interrelated themes, namely the "what might have been" linked to Eliot's friendship to Emily Hale and "the still point" towards which the whole poem strives. The way to "the still point" is essentially Christian, as, for instance, depicted in "Burnt Norton":

> The inner freedom from the practical desire,
> The release from action and suffering, release from the inner
> And the outer compulsion, yet surrounded
> By a grace of sense, a white light still and moving (BN II. 24-27, 181)

The rejection of the self in its pursuit of pure love and "the release from suffering" as a reward are virtually Christian commandments. This is a reference St John of the Cross, a Spanish mystic of the sixteenth century. Mysticism forms part of Berdyaev's philosophy and is also described in detail by Evelyn Underhill, whose work Eliot read. Underhill argues in *Mysticism* (1911) that it is in fact quite short-sighted to throw ourselves on the mercy of materialism, which has prospered since the industrial revolution. The question is "why, after all, take as our standard

a material world whose existence is affirmed by nothing more trustworthy than the sense-impressions of 'normal men'; those imperfect and easily cheated channels of communication?" (22).

The comment bears a certain similarity to the point made by Carl Jung (1875-1961), who also influenced Eliot. In his article "Approaching the Unconscious", which opens *Man and His Symbols*, also edited by Jung, he talks about the importance of the unconscious, with which we have lost our connection. As a result, our current existence is deformed, which is evident in the progressively increasing number of mental disorders. According to Jung, the cure consists in re-discovering our ties to the unconscious.

Berdyaev also sees modernist times as dangerous because his contemporaries intend to subordinate their lives to reason and knowledge, excluding everything that does not fit into a rational picture of the world. As a result, the world is in crisis, and Christianity is the only solution. He claims that spiritual life is the most real type of life, in which the soul is awakened and urges for a return to spirituality in opposition to the current materialistic drift of humankind. He argues that it is the spiritual experience that allows us to overcome the meaninglessness of our rational being and achieve "a perfect state of immanence" (*Freedom and Spirit,* 95).

The disillusionment with modernity is shared by both Eliot and Akhmatova. Eliot's *The Waste Land* fully demonstrates it, and although by the time of writing *Four Quartets* he had discovered faith, he continued to be disappointed with the state of civilisation. World War II only aggravated the feeling. Unlike Eliot, Akhmatova witnessed the horrors of the civil wars and Stalinism, the reason why

Poem Without a Hero remains a very dark poem. However, being a true believer, she could not give up hope completely.

Having argued that we are in a state of constant anxiety being unable to fit our living into the physical world alone, Underhill proposes mysticism as a possible solution. She believes that "the desire of knowledge is a part of the desire of the perfect love" (*Mysticism*, 45), but the achievement of true knowledge does not happen through our intellect, rather the opposite happens in the state of "recollection, contemplation, ecstasy and their allied conditions" (57), that is, in much less rational states. This is precisely why mysticism should be viewed as a teaching that is capable of enlightening its followers to bring them closer to truth, for the full mystic consciousness is, in force, "passive union with God" (36). What empowers mysticism to serve as a true way is its very nature, which dictates the symbiosis of the intellect with emotions in what is essentially an impassioned desire to comprehend the world and learn how to love it.

Eliot shares the high validation that Underhill gives to mysticism and employs it as a path to salvation. First of all, like Underhill, he sees great value in pain and suffering as forces capable of purifying human souls. For instance, Movement IV of "East Coker" describes the whole world as a hospital, in which there is a nurse "whose constant care is not to please / But to remind of our, and Adam's curse, / And that, to be restored, our sickness must grow worse" (EC IV. 8-10, 190).

The healing power of pain accompanies the text of *Poem Without a Hero* all the way through too, as it is full of the suffering, which Akhmatova and her fellow countrymen underwent. She portrays that excruciating pain as highly rewarding, as

for her it is as much torture as honour to witness "The real – not the calendar – / Twentieth Century" (562). Such importance given to pain is illustrative of Underhill's claim that human existence strives for more than a mere physical being. Akhmatova accepts pain and tragedy since she invests them with a Christian value.

9.3 Humility as "the only wisdom we can hope to acquire" and the Mystical Way

As in *Mysticism*, *Four Quartets* and *Poem Without a Hero* affirm the value of humility. For Eliot, humility is "the only wisdom we can hope to acquire" while for Akhmatova, it is the major lesson we must learn from history:

> Everything recounted in Part One
> About love, betrayal and passion,
> Free verse flung from its wings,
> And my city stands, mended...
> Heavy are the gravestones
> On your sleepless eyes[2] (575)

The brilliance of the masquerade in Part One is outweighed by inevitable death. The only way to face it with dignity is to live humbly, striving for freedom through "betrayal and passion".

Humility is also essential for a mystic and counterbalances the drastically self-indulgent thinking of modern man, who rejects his past, his roots, and all that

[2] In Russian: Все, что сказано в Первой части
О любви, измене и страсти
Сбросил с крыльев свободный стих,
И стоит мой город "зашитый"...
Тяжелы надгробные плиты
На бессонных очах твоих. (343)

cannot be controlled by the intellect. However, Underhill warns her readers that the beauty of mystical achievements is the most complete yet "the most difficult expression of life" (*Mysticism*, 83), because to the same degree that it is pure love, it is also a self-surrender to the other, to God.

The mystical way of knowledge, or enlightening, implies going through five phases, which include awakening, purgation, illumination, the dark night of the soul, and finally, union. This translates the three-fold Christian model of awakening-purgation-union. This is also the route that Eliot follows to discover freedom. Returning to the quotation from "Burnt Norton":

> The inner freedom from the practical desire,
> The release from action and suffering, release from the inner
> And the outer compulsion, yet surrounded
> By a grace of sense, a white light still and moving,
> *Erhebung* without motion, concentration
> Without elimination, both a new world
> And the old made explicit, understood
> In the completion of its partial ecstasy,
> The resolution of its partial horror. (BN II. 24-32, 181)

In the light of Underhill's suggestions, it becomes evident that the poetic voice calls for that freedom which can only be found through pain, in the release from passions and desires, and which leads to the "white light still and moving".

In the pattern presented by mystics, awakening is reminiscent of conversion, after which a mystic notices more and more his imperfection and reaches purgation. In suffering of purgation, the mystic achieves illumination, the stage at which they discover the transcendent world opposing the known world of the senses. However, the anguish of body and mind does not end, and the mystic has to surrender to reach the dark night of the soul in order to overcome the most dramatic challenge of his

life, for the mystic must reject his ego and any link to the self. Only by successfully passing this last yet most substantial trial does the mystic enter the stage of final union, becoming one with the transcendent.

Therefore, every step of the mystical way underlines the active part that a mystic is to play in his quest to find pure love. According to Underhill, truth does not reveal itself to the chosen ones; it is achieved through learning how to truly love truth, which implies that this way is open to everybody who wishes to take it. Underhill gives the definition of mystical achievement as "at once an act of love, an act of surrender, and an act of supreme perception" (*Mysticism*, 83-84).

As if following this pattern, the *Poem* and *Quartets* take their readers through the poetic personae's own purgation, which starts with awakening (when a mystic-to-be first answers the call of the transcendent and finds more and more imperfections in the world) and goes on to purgation (the state of pain and suffering). Whether its Eliotian purifying fire or Akhmatovesque masquerade, both serve the purpose of bringing the soul to atonement and to that moment of illumination, in which one discovers the transcendental world.

Consistently rejecting the idea of linearity, Eliot is not straightforward in following the stages of the mystical way. To my mind, a certain stage prevails in a given quartet yet all of the stages reappear in each chapter. For instance, "Burnt Norton" starts with a visit to the rose-garden, which is described as a moment of illumination, allowing us to see the haven of those who will reach union. However, in Movement III, Eliot quotes almost directly Saint John of the Cross in describing the state of the dark night of the soul:

> Descend lower, descend only
> Into the world of perpetual solitude,
> World not world, but that which is not world,
> Internal darkness, deprivation
> And destitution of all property,
> Desiccation of the world of sense,
> Evacuation of the world of fancy,
> Inoperancy of the world of spirit (BN III. 25-32, 182-183)

"The Dry Salvages" appears more concerned with the dark night of the soul than any other quartet. It torments readers with the uncertainty of being between the "river" of human time and "the ocean" of eternity, with the constant reminders of our mortality. Eliot reminds us of the sufferings a soul must go through before reaching "the rose-garden:

> But to apprehend
> The point of intersection of the timeless
> With time, is an occupation for the saint—
> No occupation either, but something given
> And taken, in a lifetime's death in love,
> Ardour and selflessness and self-surrender. (DS V. 17-22, 199-200)

The parallels with mysticism are apparent. The reference to someone capable of perceiving "the timeless and the time" as a saint echoes mystical beliefs, which clearly differentiate between the mystical way filled with religious feeling and the path denying it, the latter being untrue. Also, the connection between love and self-surrender is precisely what Eliot highlights as the most difficult part of the mystical way.

Akhmatova's *Poem* is definitely not mystical poetry, but like the *Quartets* it affirms the purifying power of pain and suffering and posits the Christian belief in

an afterlife, in which sins may be redeemed. Furthermore, the moving force behind the poem bears a certain resemblance with what concerned the mystics and Underhill, as Akhmatova's main concern is not providing a neat and logical understanding of life but giving meaning to life.

On the structural level, this is confirmed by our movement from the torments of the masquerade in "The Year Nineteen Thirteen" towards those of history in "Obverse". Having witnessed so much, though, the poetic persona's spirit is not suppressed as she reminds her readers of the significance of witnessing historical horrors. She believes that suffering has a cognitive value and is an unavoidable test in which the self has to prove itself.:

> Soon I will need a lyre,
> But that of Sophocles, not Shakespeare.
> At the threshold stands – Destiny. (569)

Akhmatova links Destiny (with a capital letter) to philosophy, not poetry, for her, poetry is not to be staged but to be read as a complete vision of the world. She goes on to affirm that she fears "neither death nor shame"[3] (584) feeling sure of her destiny as the voice of history that will claim its price on those who have called for it.

As Eliot takes us to the rose-garden in the *Quartets,* Akhmatova brings her readers to the free space of "Epilogue", leaving us on the road. Feeling less reassured about people's fate, she cannot tell where this road is to take us, only that there is a path to truth and eternity.

[3] In Russian: "Не боюсь ни смерти, ни срама" (339)

9.4 "Sin is Behovely": Reconciliation with the Imperfections of Human Nature

One more significant obstacle on the way to freedom is evil, which also forms part of the Christian worldview. This notion is not of importance in either the *Quartets* or *Poem*. In Akhmatova's text, the word "evil" appears three times. In the first chapter, it depicts the horns of one of the guests, who looks like Akhmatova's double, Olga Sudeikina: "Like little hooves, her boots are pounding / Like a little bell, her earrings jingling / Evil horns in her palish ringlets"[4] (556) In "Obverse", the personified poem uses "evil" to describe Akhmatova's midnight promising her "royal kiss" for the "midnight malice" (572). Reappearing in "Epilogue", evil is the pursuit, from which the lyrical persona escapes "in the belly of the flying fish" (575). Although the word is used occasionally, there is a certain development within its usage, as it is transformed from the terrifying evil in the first part to the evil which fails to catch the poetic persona in the last. Eliot does not mention "evil" at all, he only mentions sin. Thus, in the *Poem* and the *Quartets,* the self is its worst enemy, against whom Eliot and Akhmatova continue the quest towards salvation.

In this respect, Akhmatova and Eliot agree with Berdyaev. Advocating for freedom as the foundation of the self, Berdyaev sees evil as necessary: "Evil is thus the motive force behind the life of the universe. The good which has triumphed over evil is superior to the good which preceded it" (*Freedom and Spirit,* 185). Evil has accompanied man since the origin of history and guarantees his freedom by

[4] Here translation is mine. In Russian: "Как копытца, топочут сапожки, / Как бубенчик, звенят сережки, / В бледных локонах злые рожки" (328)

giving every human choice to decide for himself. Goodness alone would force us into faith, and this undermines the freedom of spirit and its development. But evil and freedom are inseparable from each other since evil constitutes the existence of freedom.

However, there is one particular "evil" that Berdyaev blames for our constant failure to build a harmonious historic sequence, which is "the messianic idea" with its "constant effect of causing division in the human mind" *(The Meaning of History*, 200). The Russian Revolution was one example, with which I concur, given the tragedy that it brought upon the world. As Berdyaev states in *The Meaning of History*, the only possible solution to universal bondage resides in terms of a victory over time (190). The regeneration after the end of the world will be the perfect union with spirit, in which everyone is free from death and the emotions that make us partial.

There are plenty of dark images in both texts, which appear to support the views of Berdyaev. For instance, the following lines are a remarkably Berdyaevian thought:

> Sin is Behovely, but
> All shall be well, and
> All manner of thing shall be well. (LG III. 17-19, 206)

So this fragment, as the whole poem, affirms time and again that sin may become goodness, as history may become freedom if one is to learn to see eternity and strive for it.

Akhmatova echoes Eliot and Berdyaev in "The Year Nineteen Thirteen":

> And again that familiar voice
> Like the echo of the mountain thunder
> Horror, death, forgiveness, love...
> Different to everything else on earth,
> This voice rushes ahead like God's messenger,
> Catching us again and again.[5]

Good and evil here are mixed together as they are in life. The inevitability of this "God's messenger" proves that evil and sins are inseparable from earthly being. They as well as the punishment for them are the way to self-rediscovery.

Therefore, the vitality of evil is based on the belief in atonement shared by Eliot and Akhmatova. This is the hope of *Four Quartets* and *Poem Without a Hero*. The fire and torments of Akhmatova's and Eliot's lines point to the redemption of the past. The self has the capacity to fill the past with value and meaning so as to reach the still point.

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[5] Here the translation is mine.
In Russian: И опять тот голос знакомый,
Будто эхо горного грома, –
Ужас, смерть, прощенье, любовь...
Ни на что на земле не похожий,
Он несется, как вестник Божий,
Настигая нас вновь и вновь. (329)

Chapter 10

At the Still Point

If readers of *Poem Without a Hero* and *Four Quartets* were to embrace the truth as reflected in the poems, what would be the outcome? What kind of time or space awaits us after the purifying fire and terror of history? Eliot and Akhmatova suggest different responses.

10.1 The Rose Garden of *Four Quartets*

Eliot presents us with an elaborate image of the still point. For instance:

> The unheard music hidden in the shrubbery,
> And the unseen eyebeam crossed, for the roses
> Had the look of flowers that are looked at (BN I. 27-29, 179-180).

This fragment from "Burnt Norton" evokes images of the first garden of Eden and is full of rather contradictory characteristics. Sounds impossible to hear, unseen looks, such a picture is confusing and almost unimaginable. However, once again, if we turn to those undiscovered yet new dimensions of time and reality, it becomes clear that such a description is simply required, for this is the place that we are not capable of achieving and, hence, understanding.

Later Eliot explains himself: "I can only say, *there* we have been: but I cannot say where. / And I cannot say, how long, for that is to place it in time" (BN II. 23, 181). Like Aristotle, Eliot suggests that this still point of no motion is also a point of no time. This is something else that is impossible for humans to conceive, for all

our reality is in movement and, thus, in time. Aristotle also conceived the world in constant movement but for the exception of the prime mover that remains unmoved. He introduces the notion of God as an eternal immovable substance: "there is something which always moves the things that are in motion, and the first mover is itself unmoved" (*The Basic Works*, 751). We are brought back to the phenomenon of movement and time, forming an indivisible unity. Therefore, the first mover is unmoved but also does not belong to the time that measures all the motion in the world. Consequently, the first mover is eternal.

This God, the first mover, possesses truth and observes the moving world from the point of no motion. This vantage point, according to Aristotle, is also achievable for us, but we are able to be there very rarely and for a short time, while God is eternally situated there (*The Basic Works*, 8). Thus, divine wisdom is something that we can access, but never in its fullness, for this is not our lot.

Such a view on time is congenial with Anna Akhmatova's:

> ...I
> halloed to a distant echo, shattered
> The unbroken sleep of things;
> Where, witness of all in the world,
> At dawn or twilight, an old
> Maple looks into the room (129)[1]

[1] In Russian: Я аукалась с дальним эхом,
Неуместным смущая смехом
Непробудную сонь вещей,
Где, свидетель всего на свете,
На закате и на рассвете
Смотрит в комнату старый клен (328)

"A distant echo" is an echo of true knowledge, unattainable for a human being. Hemschmeyer's translation in English is not quite accurate, as "shatter" implies breaking "the unbroken sleep", whereas in the original the poetic persona, literally translated, only confuses and embarrasses "the unbroken sleep" and causes a minor disturbance. Hemschmeyer's translation conveys the sleep as actually disrupted, when in fact this sleep cannot be broken because it is eternal. The images of the rose-garden and the pool are to unveil what is to be discovered in the first quartet. History is the point of departure of both the "Introduction" of the *Poem* and "Burnt Norton", and "the rose-garden" emerges as the first and most prominent reference to history, or perhaps, as a metaphor of it.

The interpretations of this image never cease. Eliot referred to Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* as the source of this passage (*The Poems of T.S. Eliot*, 909). Lewis's book contains an episode in which the girl discovers a wonderful garden that is too small for her to explore unless she finds a way to make herself smaller. The episode is a clear illustration of human longing for something unachievable, at least, in a world with no magic pies or drinks.

Another garden in play comes from Eliot's past. Bergonzi indicates that in St. Louis, the Eliots' house was situated next to a girls' school, to the garden of which the young poet had a key. Bergonzi suggests that it was that particular garden that became the source for the recurrent motif of "the laughter of hidden children" (*T.S. Eliot,* 2).

One more garden is Eden. The parallel is relevant as Eliot addressing "garden" for the first time in the poem with a definite article; this is not any rose-

garden, and Eliot assumes that his readers would know to which garden he refers. The image takes us to the origin of humankind according to Christianity. Eden is one of the most recognisable symbols in the Western tradition signifying the beginning of human history.

Coincidentally, the rose-garden has a pool. Contrary to Akhmatova's dark waters, Eliot depicts "water out of sunlight", which underlines the contrast between the two realities, the Russian poet re-living her own past history, and Eliot taking his readers to history as it is in an ideal world.

Eliot's seemingly confusing description of the still point should not look surprising for those familiar with the Mystical Way and the abovementioned philosophies. The still point is the point of utter equilibrium, where fixity co-exists with movement and beginning meets the end.

> At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless;
> Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,
> But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,
> Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from nor towards,
> Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point,
> There would be no dance, and there is only the dance.
> I can only say, there we have been: but I cannot say where.
> And I cannot say, how long, for that is to place it in time.
>
> (BN II. 16-23, 181)

The still point is beyond time and space, although both can lead us to it. This point is Aristotle's unmoving first mover, mystical union with the transcendental, and Berdyaev's Kingdom of God, where freedom and Spirit overcome existential time.

This place is the "fully-tasted present", to quote Blamires (*Words Unheard,* 21). This is the state achieved with the conquest of time. It is at this point we will find, as the poet phrases it in "Little Gidding", "A condition of complete simplicity

/ (Costing not less than everything)" (LG V. 40-41, 209). When encountering the still point in the first quartet, readers are not able to appreciate it fully, as if it were a momentous glance at the promised land. To actually reach it, the whole journey along *Four Quartets* is required, and it can be fulfilled only when "the fire and the rose are one" (LG V. 46, 209). Bergonzi draws a parallel between this line and the rose and fire of *Paradiso*, affirming that such an allusion is "fitting", as Dante had been Eliot's guide "through the hell and purgatory of his own imagination" (173). Spender, on the other hand, makes a comparison with *Purgatorio*, in which Dante meets a friend who describes to the poet his punishment that shall lead him to *Paradiso* (176). Gardner also hears Dantesque echoes in the closing lines and sees the rose as "the resurrection symbol of the rose of heaven", hence, alluding to *Paradiso* (*The Art of T.S. Eliot*, 183). Whether in Purgatory with the promise of Heaven or already in paradise, at this point of the poem, we are as close to the true world as possible.

Unlike Dante, though, Eliot does not describe the realm of happiness; in fact, he avoids any precise description. The elusiveness is perhaps linked to the very nature of the place in question. Just as Akhmatova was aware of how different the world and people became in the course of the twentieth century, so was Eliot. Where Dante's contemporaries were yearning for paradise as a reward for a truly spiritual life and the final goal of their quest, modern people, in the light of the horrors they have caused, seem lost in an existential wasteland. An individual effort within a theological frame of mind was enough to reach truth, and Dante provides us with a very vivid image of it. In modern time, the self can only have a brief glimpse of it:

Eliot experiences the still point in "Burnt Norton" but cannot remain there. The moment of full awareness is sudden and transitory.

This brief glimpse gives him faith and strength to voice his experience, guides him through darkness in the hope of redemption. Spender rightly characterises "Little Gidding" as the "furthest point" in Eliot's "spiritual and poetic exploration (Gardner *The Art of T.S. Eliot* 177). Donoghue even sees it as "the return, the survival of gods" (*Words Alone* 286). At the end the poem, we feel the triumph of meaningfulness and are confident that "everything shall be well". The still point absolves time and history and redeems our nature.

10.2 "There beyond the island, beyond the garden" of *Poem Without a Hero*

In comparison to Eliot, Akhmatova avoids the direct answer to the question "what is beyond time?". If Eliot names an endpoint to which we should aspire, she does not. Her idea of paradise can only be guessed through the hints shown here and there in the *Poem*. One of the most explicit references to the topic also appears in the first part, in parallel with Eliot: "For one moment of peace / I would trade eternal rest"[2] (555). The alignment with the still point is more evident in the original, as the Russian word translated as "peace" also signifies "rest, calm, stillness", and it is the

[2] In Russian: "За одну минуту покоя / Я посмертный отдам покой" (327)

same word that is used for the English "rest". This is the only time that Akhmatova makes use of the term.

Similar to the paradoxical nature of the *Quartets*, Akhmatova's *Poem* begs for peace in exchange for eternal peace. These lines are at the end of the first fragment of "The Year Nineteen Thirteen", and they appear as a supplication for calmness instead of calamity, as if in despair from the terrifying visions of the past. I contend that taken as an idiom, "eternal rest" does not necessarily imply rest per se, it may simply mean the afterlife, whether this be peaceful or not. She is willing to trade whatever happens in the afterlife, not knowing what it would be exactly. Read as such, "eternal rest" does not mirror "one moment of peace" (as may seem at first glance) but opposes it. To put it differently, the poet would give up eternity for a peaceful minute in her earthly life.

In the light of Eliot's text, the lines can also be read as referring to the still point for which Akhmatova longs in the middle of chaos. Such a suggestion is consonant with the whole creation of the *Quartets*, praying for peace and harmony, while the world was being consumed by violence and darkness. Perhaps, following his example, Akhmatova also steps out of the madness around her in an attempt to reach the still point.

In the third fragment of the first part, Akhmatova continues the theme of time and of the insignificance of death: "And this stupefying drowsiness / Is harder for me to overcome than death"[3] (559). It is worth noting that both quotes are put in

[3] In Russian: "А дурманящую дремоту / Мне трудней, чем смерть, превозмочь" (330)

italics by the poet and form part of poetic persona's inner monologue while hosting the masquerade. The location puts a particular emphasis on the lines, distancing them from the main narrative and thus conferring more objectivity on them than the rest of the text.

The last explicit reference to this theme is contained at the end of the third section of "The Year Nineteen Thirteen", also quoted in relation to Aristotle and the opposition between the ideal and the material:

> There beyond the island, beyond the garden,
> Won't our glances meet again,
> Our eyes as clear as before,
> Won't you say to me once more
> The word that conquers death
> And solves the riddle of my life? (563)[4]

Here we find yet another mention of death, which again is denied its power over life. Akhmatova mentions the garden but suggests that there is something beyond it. The image is thus reminiscent of Eliot as the garden appears as the locus amoenus while at the same time being significantly different. Where Eliot sees the end of the journey, Akhmatova intends to go on. The only other time the garden will appear in the text is in "Epilogue", where it serves as the background of the scene: "In the Sheremetev Garden the lindens are blooming and a nightingale is singing"[5] (573).

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[4] In Russian: Там за островом, там за садом
Разве мы не встретимся взглядом
Наших прежних ясных очей,
Разве ты мне не скажешь снова
Победившее смерть слово
И разгадку жизни моей? (333)

[5] In Russian: "В Шереметьевском саду цветут липы и поет соловей" (341)

Eliot and Akhmatova both share the notion of "the word that conquers death" and is capable of investing life with meaning. As one may remember from "Trying to learn to use words, and every attempt / Is a wholly new start, and a different kind of failure" (EC V. 3-4, 191) of "East Coker", Eliot was also concerned with the power of words, which is a concern of any poet. Striving for truth, both Eliot and Akhmatova were facing the need to express the inexpressible, to find a way to give their words such power that they become the light that can defeat darkness.

The word that Akhmatova hopes to hear beyond the garden is the same word that echoes in Eliot's rose-garden and also the word that inspired both texts. The word is both the origin of *Poem Without a Hero* and *Four Quartets* and their final destination; the word is beginning and end of everything and enables a new beginning.

* * *

Time and history, as Akhmatova and Eliot demonstrate in the poems, are our coordinates, which shape and define our world and our perception of everything in it. In accordance with Aristotle's belief, the *Poem* and *Quartets* imply the inseparable character of place, movement, and time. Quite positively, Eliot believes that we, perhaps, have already perceived the still point and bear that image inside, a suggestion close to the ideas of Plato. Akhmatova does not express such a belief, although her "still point" resembles that of the *Quartets*. Therefore, both poets, reminding us of the past and the way in which all things are linked, persuade us that we should move towards the point where no time or position will matter any longer,

for this will be the point at which we will know truth, embrace the unity of our being, and achieve freedom.

Conclusion

In her diaries Lydia Chukovskaya noted Akhmatova's remark that the category of time is considerably more complex than the category of space (Volume 3, 63). Scientifically speaking, this may not necessarily be true, as we find in new research on the universe. However, for humankind, time is indeed the centre of all our existence. For instance, the very origin of religion – and religion's impact on history is difficult to overestimate – can be related to humans being conscious of their death and thus, the preoccupation with what happens after. To use Heidegger's term, humans throughout their history have been "towards death", hence, focused on the limitedness of their time on earth.

While time has been one of the central points of many philosophies, it became particularly relevant in the light of the controversial and dramatic twentieth century. That century brought humankind much closer to the understanding of cosmic secrets, the human body, and microorganisms. Unfortunately, numerous scientific breakthroughs were clouded, if not outweighed, by the horrors of military conflicts and some of the most inhumane crimes in history.

As the world shook with all the new possibilities, the fundamental concepts of human existence begged redefinition. Embracing the challenge, Modernist thinkers suggested a view that humans were in control of their own destiny, rejecting the idea of an imposed order, in which everything is decided in advance, and instead, seeing an individual as with the power to change history and shape a new trajectory.

As liberating as such an idea is, the abuse of and ignorance about this human capacity provoked the resultant cataclysms of recent history. In an attempt to stop humankind from its ongoing self-destruction, two Modernist poets created their last major poems, both of which are dedicated to time and our place in it. In this regard, the present research aimed at defining time and its complexity as seen and depicted by Thomas Stearns Eliot and Anna Akhmatova.

The first objective was to find links between the two poets. Although the similarities between the two are scarce, some are vital for understanding the whole of their poetry, including the texts studied, namely *Four Quartets* and *Poem Without a Hero*. The numerical parallel regarding their life spans (both were to live 76 years) is curious, such facts of the biographies as being raised by water (river and sea) and the interest to poetry from a very young age are present in their works. Of greater significance are the thinkers and poets, from past and present, who influenced them. Dante and Shakespeare became undeniable references for Eliot and Akhmatova, especially Dante, whose impact is evident in both the *Quartets* and the *Poem*. Eliot's and Akhmatova's association with Imagism and Acmeism respectively helped them to refine their aesthetic views, which they continued perfecting up to the point of creating their crowning works.

The established link between the two poets justifies the enriching potential of studying the *Quartets* and *Poem* side by side rather than separately. Both can be considered as belonging to war poetry, confessional poetry, or witness literature. In view of the many contrasts between the poets, the kinship of the poems is worth noting. The general tone of disillusionment with humankind and contemporary

times enforces the lyrical voices behind the texts. Thus, they become a testimony of individual pain, against willing ignorance and a way to truth through purgatory and eventual enlightenment.

My third objective was to enrich our understanding of time as it is conceived in *Four Quartets* and *Poem Without a Hero*. I have demonstrated how elaborate and multi-faced this concept is in the lyrics. Chukovskaya once noted that "Akhmatova's muse has always been history" (14). The same can refer to Eliot, whose *The Waste Land*, among many other poems, was also concerned with history and time, although there he implied a very different perspective from the later piece. By 1936 and 1940, the years when the poets started working on the *Quartets* and *Poem*, they had explored and experienced various dimensions of time both through their lives and in their poetry. Therefore, their perception of the concept expressed in the texts was to draw a line under everything that had been said and learned before.

To begin with, Eliot and Akhmatova reject a lineal view on time. If I were to seek a geometrical representation of their perspective on the notion, the most appropriate choice would probably be a sphere. Seen as such, time is liberated from the limits of dual dimensionality, according to which, firstly, one considers only the events that actually took place, and secondly, places them on a three-fold line, thus, distributing the events between past, present, and future. On the contrary, time as a sphere is filled with potential, for everything in its system is tightly woven together, and any alteration in one element inevitably affects the entirety of time.

What is more, non-lineal time embraces that which has happened and that which has not. I argue the dimension of "what might have been" is crucial for both poets, since they were well aware of how present the life not lived remains. It serves to the narrators not only as a source of regret about a missed chance but also as a guiding light, which interacts with their present and allows to perceive all time at once. Like the ghost of Hamlet's father, "what might have been" has voice and strength to communicate with those that did not live it and thus, impacts their living.

No less important is the actual past. Having witnessed two world wars, both poets transform their traumatic experiences into the path to enlightenment. In the case of Akhmatova, we deal with an even richer historical context, as she was also to endure the Revolutions, Leninism, Stalinism, and witnessed some of the Thaw years. As Haight notes in her biography, "Anna Akhmatova seems to have been chosen by fate to test all the intuitive and inherited values of her contemporaries, first, against the enthusiastic creeds spread by a revolution dreaming of a future paradise and then, by its repressive and paranoiac aftermath: the Stalinist totalitarian state" (*Akhmatova: A Poetic Pilgrimage,* I).

Some of the references to the actual past are straightforward but most of them are presented more abstractly, as metaphors and allusions, and cover the period between the beginning of humankind according to Christianity, meaning Eden and Original Sin, and World War II. Thus, history permeates the poems, serving as both context and protagonist. The poems' history is tragic and always universal, even when concerning the poets' personal experiences. As such, it becomes a transcendental entity that encompasses the answers to all the questions of existence,

formulated by Paul Goghen as "Who are we? Where from? Where are we going?"[1]. Akhmatova and Eliot insist on the need to learn from history so as to shape a different destination for humankind.

The poetic voices that are guiding across the man-made purgatory, through the most illuminating moment of time as well as the darkest hours of human history, at the end brings us to the point which is the quintessence of incertitude. This point resists any determination except with the preposition "between", which itself could be the lexical embodiment of uncertainty. As disturbing as such a state may be, perhaps this is what it is necessary to learn to embrace, especially in the modern era of technology, when facts that admit no doubt have accumulated so much power in human minds. The problem is, though, that just as humankind turned its back on intuition in preference for fact-based knowledge and, more generally speaking, favoured the rational over the irrational, it lost its spirituality, its invisible foundation. "You must go through the way in which you are not" (EC III 43; 189), says the lyrical narrator, and so forgetting and forgiving are to teach us how to become one with what we so wastefully rejected long ago.

The key to such learning is concealed in memory. History, which is not an archive on a dusty shelf but very much an active existential force, is closely linked to memory and to freedom. Without memory, people are bound to repeat their mistakes and thus, prolong their own earthly purgatory. However, if we are to embrace the power of time, if we are to remember and so grasp the truth that has been escaping us, history and time will become freedom from purgatory. In words

[1] This is a reference to the famous painting of Paul Goghen under the same title.

of Kramer, "memory, we discover – as a primary faculty of the soul when engaged without desires for a predicted outcome but as a pointer toward what has yet to be realized – exists for liberation" (*Redeeming Time*, 161).

Regarding the outcome, the poets do not come to the same conclusion. Throughout *Four Quartets*, Eliot makes the still point, the site of true being and enlightening, the goal of one's existential trajectory. This is seen on various levels: the highly harmonic organisation of the text, several embodiments of the still point, and finally, the ending, which coincides with Julian of Norwich's "All shall be well". Akhmatova finishes her poem with a worrying image of a personified Russia leaving to the East, which for a long time was the place of exile and imprisonment. What is more, the theme of guilt and the impossibility of altering the past is more vocal in *Poem* than *Quartets*. As a result, *Poem* leaves its readers with an alarming call for action, specifically to remember and learn to employ the power of time, but without a precise Promised Land.

By analysing the texts of Eliot and Akhmatova in unity, the present research contributes not only to current studies of these poets but also to the study of Modernism. By linking the Anglo-American and Russian poets, the dissertation affords a broader perspective on Modernism as a world phenomenon. The movement's geography is truly impressive as it reached Russia, Africa, and Latin America. What is more, Modernism overcame cultural borders, for it both influenced and was influenced by them. This was arguably the only time when Russian culture had the ability to participate in the creative process simultaneously and fully.

Apart from enriching the field of Modernist studies, my research has aimed at a greater appreciation of *Four Quartets* and *Poem Without a Hero*, perhaps, more so regarding the latter. Read together, they mutually intensify the message they seek to transmit. What is more, such a comparison broadens the understanding of the concepts introduced in the lyrics, thus, making a case for comparative studies. This is particularly relevant for the *Poem*, as the field of Akhmatova studies still has a long way to go to reach the diversity and profundity of academic research on Eliot.

With time as the main focus, this thesis adds to the field of studies on time but goes further in relating the poetry to philosophy and literature studies. As I have demonstrated, time is an utterly complex phenomenon, which needs further exploration both in philosophy and in literature. Mutually enhancing, the two disciplines help to build a comprehensive depiction of the notion of time in literature.

Given the intricacy of the concept of time, it is likely that future research will focus on its effects in Modernist poetry more generally. It is of interest to bring in texts by other authors, perhaps presenting a different aesthetic group or geographical region. The findings may indicate whether the view of time and history suggested by Eliot and Akhmatova independently from each other is as universal as it seems based on the current study.

Further research may also lie in exploring further the relations between Eliot and Akhmatova, and their considerable literary evolution throughout their creative careers. Eliot started as a revolutionary in rhythm and poetic techniques, while Akhmatova intended to modernise existing forms. With time, both created their

own form of poetics, which had “Eliotian” or “Akhmatovesque” sounds. Taking into account the closeness of their last major poems, it will be important and interesting to compare their earlier works so as to establish possible similarities in their young works or prove the uniqueness of the *Quartets* and the *Poem* as a unifying point for the poets.

It is also of significance to draw more parallels between Western and Russian authors, for both share similar sources, influences, and poetic goals. So as to overcome the seeming exclusion of Russian studies from Modernism, it would be necessary to highlight the potential kinship between Russian and Western Modernist traditions. In light of the findings of this present research, such a perspective appears promising and long-awaited.

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Appendix: Photographs

Anna Akhmatova. c.1925

Thomas Stearns Eliot. c.1926

Natan Altman. *Anna Akhmatova*. 1914

Wyndham Lewis. *T.S. Eliot*. 1938

T.S. Eliot at his desk. 1944

A. Akhmatova at her desk. c.1950-s