CONCLUSION

While considered in the light of the later Akhmatova poems, the early poetry of Akhmatova, which is the subject of the first chapter of this study, obviously displays a relatively narrow range of thematic concerns. Towards her later career, themes of political and historical consequences as well as philosophical themes play an increasingly important role in her writings; but in the early poetry the theme of love and its related sufferings dominate. This dominant theme, however, has received varied treatment from her. The irresistible attraction of love regardless of its sufferings, the overall supremacy of love, the experiences of the moments of elation brought by a realization of the bitter-sweet sadness of love, the memory of love lost, the feelings of sadness at the moment of separation or parting, a realization of rejection and betrayal by the lover, self-accusation which is the result of her own non commitment in love and the feeling of guilt born thereof---- these are some of the many perspectives whereupon the theme of love has been projected by Akhmatova. They reveal her sincere concern with the matter-of-fact psychological realities of the real and intimate love experience and give the impression of an intimate diary or more particularly of a confession. Though attempts have been made to put individual poems with similarities in their amatory content, thereby forming explicit cycles, yet such attempts are not always helpful in the evaluation of the individual poems, written at different places and times. Besides, in the story projected in the poems can not or does not progress, as in a short story or on a novel, towards
some denouement. These poems yet make clear the potentialities of a novelist within Akhmatova.

Against this dominant theme of the pain and sufferings of love, some of the poems again display a strong note of hope and aspiration arising out of the inherent strength to survive the loss or abandonment. In some other poems, the note of hope is accompanied by the realization of the immortality of the soul, marking a new development in the persona's consciousness, while in some others she approaches the creative power of Muse as a medium for release of pain and suffering.

The comparison of her love poems with those of Kamala Das, the distinguished Indo-English poet, helps specifying the concerns and manner of both the poets. Kamala Das resembles Akhmatova in her exclusive concern with the personal experiences of love in poetry. But there are also striking differences between the two. These differences are mainly the differences in their respective confessional modes. The love poems of Kamala Das, with their frank treatment of sexual love and the cause of woman's exploiting in a male-dominated society, are characterized by an air of nonconformity and urgency which are perceptibly absent in Akhmatova's poems. In Kamala's poems, often there is the rising voice of depression, frustration and anger against any control or restriction imposed on her by her lover. Akhmatova's psychic exploration of her woman self, on the other hand, is characterized by her womanly postures and restraints, and hence, she is not so fiery and eloquent, like Kamala Das, in her complaints. Akhmatova's mode displays the intimate nature of her amatory concerns, placing the reader in the role of a confidant to the confessions of the poetic persona.
The use of different guises who can reflect a part of Akhmatova's own personality is observed in almost all these early poems. This technique sets the experience in the poems in a larger context, and also draws a detachment from the poet's own personal experience. Her such stylistic features, besides the thematic concerns, relate her to Acmeism that revolted against the dominating Symbolists who were taking poetry away from this world or used it as means of their escape to mystical epiphanies or prophesies. Though Akhmatova did not prepare anything like manifestoes or critical essays in defense of their Acmeist ideals, but her poetry well illustrate the entire Acmeist ideals cherished by her colleagues in their manifestoes or essays. Her concern with the familiar or even with a fairly ordinary world in her poems is in perfect tune with Gorodetsky's emphasis of it in his manifesto. The precise embodiment of emotional experience, stressed by Annensky, on the other hand, is seen in the matter-of-fact emotional details of the love drama in her poetry.

For precise and authentic expression of the emotions and experiences, Akhmatova avoids the use of high rhetorical or overtly poetic language in her poetry. Her language is set in firm contrast to the suggestive language of the symbolists. Her language is the language of this real, physical world—her metaphors and imagery are all those drawn from this world of living existence.

Besides these, there are concrete details of time and place in these poems. These details often heighten the heroine's emotional drama while they also highlight the Acmeist ideal of clarity and specificity against the Symbolic love for mysticism. Her poetry is therefore not the poetry of hints, as Chukovskiy observed. Her poetry is the poetry of hints only in so far as it withholds much of
the important information that alludes to the private world of the 'I' in these poems. Otherwise it is a concrete world of objects real and transparent.

As an Acmeist, Akhmatova’s early works also reflect her intense concern with the literary and cultural tradition of Russia, manifesting thereby a representation of Mandelstam’s definition of the movement as nostalgia for world culture. Her early poetry extensively uses in it materials drawn from both the oral and literary tradition of Russia.

In many poems, she uses the topos of the folk tradition in order to underline the different perspectives of the amatory themes. The heroine sometimes becomes a mermaid, sometimes a Cinderella, while the lyric hero has been identified with the tsarevich or prince. Sometimes Akhmatova uses different motifs from the folk tales. Because the functions of these motifs are obligatory in the folk tales, which Vladimir Propp’s study shows, their use in the poems only contribute further to her art of precision. Besides, different forms of folk poetry, such as the chastushkas, lullaby, byliny, etc. have been used by Akhmatova. Her treatment of the figure of the Muse in her early poems, again, is another linkage to the folkloric tradition.

Besides these different folkloric materials, Akhmatova may be seen extending the applicability of her lyric situations by reference to other works of literature through allusions or quotations. In the poem on Pushkin, the link between present and past is conveyed not only by the statement A century passes, and we hear /His crackle on the path (Pushkin, 1911, Evening), but also by the juxtaposition of past and present tenses in each of the two quartrains of the poem. In Imitation of Annensky (Evening), there is textual allusions to Annensky’s work in that the melancholy of the scene in which a male hero reflects on the
disappointing ending of a romantic episode is broadly similar to the situations in several of Annensky’s poems. The 1909 poem Reading Hamlet is, again, a dramatization of a particular situation in Shakespeare’s famous drama, but Akhmatova projects it on to the concerns of her own poetry. All these authentically declare Akhmatova’s close association with the rich literary and cultural tradition of her country.

The second chapter of this study covers the middle poetry of Akhmatova which ranges from 1915 to 1930. Because of the still prominent theme of abandoned love in some poems, the middle poetry of Akhmatova often relate to her work of the early period. But it does not suggest it that she was still writing in her early manner. The drastically changing socio-political scenario, in combination with the changes in her personal life, had brought about changes both to her content and manner of this period. The earlier exploration of the emotional experiences of the lyric heroine is now shifted towards a more thoughtful handling of the heroine’s mental conditions. The insistent portrayal of precise episodes in the love drama and the cautiously recorded particulars that extensively characterize Akhmatova’s early poetry now may be seen changed to an elegiac mode of discourse. Some of the poems in Rosary indeed foreshadowed in them her present reflective mood, but the difference is that in those poems, such thoughtful exploration of the emotional states of mind appears in fragments, in the poetry of the middle period they come to the center stage. Now not only the minute details of experienced moments are checked, sometimes the poems even appear quite independently devoid of any guise or image taken from the heroine’s biography.
Thematically, this new reflective mood is best exemplified in the poems of memory and waiting. It is the memory of the beloved that makes her to trace back, but she is able to recognize her fate with a certain philosophical detachment. It is memory again that teaches her to wait, even amidst uncertainty, and to search unwearyingly. Behind the recognition of the creative role of poetry too, the new reflective mood itself is active. In the poetry of this period, the appearance of the muse is more regular than it was in her early period. In these poems it has been confirmed as the exclusive medium for the cathartic release of unbearable sorrow and pain of the heroine.

The transitional Akhmatova of the middle period may, however, be seen most prominent in her concern with the themes of war and its attendant loss, separation, fear and death. These works thus typify her tendency to place increasing emphasis on the world about her while drifting away from the self-obsessed mood of her earlier writings.

The theme of self-sacrifice for her suffering people and her country is another important motif associated with her transition in this period. Another representation of her nationalist stance is seen in her rejection of the very idea of exchanging her part in her country’s suffering for the life of an exile. She prefers to retain her moral independence whatever cost it may bring. A new function for art is again revealed in some poems, as in That August, like a Yellow Flame (Tot avgust, kak zheltoe plamya), in the context of the First World War. Just as the face of the capital is changing as a result of the war, so too the warrior and the poet must both adopt new roles.

In the context of the changing scenario, even some of the poetry of the middle period was projected by the poet as allegories of the political situation.
The parallel between the heroine's private and public lives and the juxtaposition of clearly political poems and apparently personal appears too deliberate to be purely coincidental.

Her new meditative mood brings changes to her language and form too. The conversational vocabulary and syntax of the early poetry now gives way to a diction which is capable of bearing the burden of her new reflective mood. The dol’nik tends to yield to the iamb, and the rhymes too become more exact now.

Akhmatova, of course, continues to intensify her new reflective mood, represented by the shifts both in her content and style, by allusion to that past with all its riches that range from folklore to literary and cultural monuments. The references to the past writers like Dante or Pushkin assert with greater force the social role Akhmatova had begun to embrace since this period. The Bible and other religious texts are also used extensively to represent the most varied of feelings and sentiments. Sometimes exemplary characters from Biblical or ecclesiastical history are used to illuminate the situation of the speaker. Her direct and almost prosaic style in her civic poems of this period again relate to her close association with the early heroic poems of the Russian poetic tradition. Her civic themes of courage, sacrifice, martyrdom etc. of this period of course display great similarity with the same themes ushered in those early heroic poems, and there are similarities in their representation too. Besides, some rhythmic features, like the one of a special balance when several short syntactic units are followed by one or two long ones relate Akhmatova’s poetry of this period to the rhythmic prose of the 12th century chronicle narratives, like that of Cyril of Turov’s Sermons. Her first longer poem, belonging to this period, By the Sea Shore (1915) is, again, exemplary of the way in which reference to folklore
and to the literary tradition gets combined in her work. The young girl waiting eagerly for the arrival of her lover is essentially folkloric in spirit, and to increase the impact of this situation Akhmatova uses anaphora and other forms of repetition within relatively simple stylistic constructions in the same way as in folk poetry. Besides the poem relies on Pushkin's *Tale of the Fisherman and His Golden Fish* (1833) for its title, its particular adaptation of folkloric verse metre and its vocabulary and syntax. All these only evoke Akhmatova's authority of the literary and cultural tradition in her works.

In the poetry of Akhmatova's later period (1930-66), which is the subject of the third chapter of this study, the incorporation of historical and political themes, in full spirit with the literary and cultural tradition of Russia, becomes increasingly insistent. Akhmatova herself recognizes, in clear and precise terms, the shifts in her poetry by this time: "A return to the early manner is impossible". It was because the exact conditions of life and culture were changing drastically, and poetry demanded in it an urgent representation of all those changes. It is against this background that in the later period, Akhmatova has become increasingly preoccupied with public themes, dispensing altogether with the love diary or lyrical novel format of her early books and locating herself in a larger context than before. The comparative study of Akhmatova with the leading Assamese poet, Nilmani Phookan, attempted towards the end of this chapter, has related to this very shift in both the poets. Like the early Akhmatova, Phookan's earlier works also often spoke of the intensely personal experiences of the poet, that too by furnishing them in the attire of unique imagery drawn from a living, yet tranquil world. But this manner did not last.
long. When the Assam movement took place during the 1980s to turn all humanity and its attendant values to nothing, Phookan was compelled to shift from his early manner. Phookan’s poetry then came out to represent the fears, the whispers, the cries, the wounds as well as the pains of millions of people who suffered during that period of howling terror and horror. Phookan’s representation of his experiences thus became universal, just as it became in the Akhmatova of the later period. This study makes it clear that it is this intense concern with their immediate social and political history that accounts for their ultimate maturity as poets.

In her 1921 collection, Anno Domini, Akhmatova’s poetry had already displayed a recognizable shift from private to public and historical subject matters; now, in her later period, this shift acquires an epical dimension, in such poems as Requiem (Rekviem, 1935-40), and Poem without a Hero (Poema bez geroia, 1940-65), by their urgent address to the larger contexts of contemporary life. In the later period she is more frequently involved with longer forms and the expansion of forms now evidently allows her for a broadening of theme. Her involvement with the tradition also becomes more organic now, as she alludes or refers to the past or contemporary writers almost consistently from the beginning.

To spell out the public role of the poet as the chronicler of the contemporary times is one of the dominant motifs of Akhmatova’s poetry of the 1930s onwards. Some of the poems, as In Memory of Mikhail Bulgakov (1940), are seen to use the early image of the flute, or reed, the conventional accessory of the lyrical muse, in this context. But this early motif has been used against wider perspectives now, declaring that the creative artist’s muse can not remain
indifferent to the public sufferings. In a poem addressed to Mikhail Lozinsky (1941), allusion has been made to Pushkin’s celebration of creativity in his 1828 poem *The Muse (Muza)*, but the text clarifies that Akhmatova’s inspiration is not the calm process of poetic apprenticeship which is recorded in Pushkin’s poem. Rather it is in the turbulent times of the contemporary scenario.

Another important motif is that of the allegorical representation of contemporary experiences. In the 1936 poem *Dante*, the persecution of Dante by the Florentine authorities becomes an allegory for the attacks on Akhmatova and others, and more broadly on Russian culture as a whole, made by the Soviet state. In *Wild Honey Smells of Freedom (Privol’em pakhnet dikii med, 1933)*, Akhmatova further invokes the examples of Pontius Pilate attempting to absolve himself of the blood of Jesus by symbolically washing his hands, and of Lady Macbeth frenziedly trying to rub from her hands the blood of the murdered Duncan. She simply means the impossibility of hiding responsibility for the deaths of others. In the 1940 poem, *Cleopatra*, the persecution Cleopatra suffers at the hand of Augustus comes to stand for the condemnation of Akhmatova and her work under the Stalinist regime. These allegorical projections clarify Akhmatova’s obvious distance from her early manner.

Sometimes Akhmatova uses materials from the medieval history as the source of her allusions. *Voronezh* (1936) evokes, especially in the opening section, a note of triumph by its reference to the victory of Peter the Great in 1380 at the Battle of Kulikovo, not far from Voronezh. The vision Voronezh, thus, is a confident one. This confident vision of Voronezh is, however, thrown into despair and dejection in the concluding four lines of the poem, where there is the
hint that Mandelstam, her friend and colleague-poet, will not survive Stalin's oppressions.

In Requiem, Akhmatova has recourse to Biblical history and finds a model in the crucifixion of Jesus, and particularly, in the responses of female figures—Mary Magdalene and Mary the Mother of Jesus— to the crucifixion, thereby representing three different stages of suffering. However, invoking the crucifixion is not merely a method for projecting the sufferings of women in Russia in the late 1930s on to a universal plane. In theological terms crucifixion implies resurrection, and this note of resurrection has been rendered explicit in the two poems in the Epilogue to Requiem. Having passed through the Terror documented in the poems of the narrative, the speaker finds she has survived and is able to record the experience of her sisters.

In Prehistory (Predyistoriya), there are numerous references to writers and literary works of the period— to Tolstoy's Anna Karenina, to Turgenev's novel Fathers and Children, to Nekrasov and Saltykov-Shchedrin. It also includes a condensed account of the life and works of Dostoevsky. Dostoevsky is shown as the presiding genius of his age; having suffered both mock executions on Semenovsky Square and Siberian exile, he is able to penetrate to the essence of Russian society and to record it. Requiem is also rich in evocations of other literary works. Allusions are detected to a very wide range of authors from Euripides, Dante and Shakespeare to Tyutehev, Nekrasov and Mayakovksy. Poem without a Hero, besides its references to Pushkin's Evgeny Onegin or Mozart's Don Giovanni, has allusions to Lermontov's Masquerade. The poem uses a masquerade setting to show how an amoral and frivolous society can be the cause of unnecessary suffering and death.
Akhmatova's fear of cultural dispossession is another dominant motif of the poetry of this period. This poems responding to the events in Britain and France at the beginning of the 20th century, which were later included in the cycle In 1940, speak of her fear of such dispossession.

The projection of these different motifs in these later poems relates to the shift in the way in which the speaker presents herself and a greater number of autobiographical referents. The range of different personae presented in the early verse now seems to be replaced by a single voice which is much closer to Akhmatova's own. However, this self is fractured and a split between the speaker and her past self occurs, so that she is often confronted with the apparition of her former self. In some of the poems, the use of the imagery and associations of her early poetry is expressive of the desire for a return to her earlier self: but soon the speaker recognizes that she cannot return there, for the past is now no longer what it was. The polymetricality and fragmentation of these later poems again only confirm Akhmatova's evolution of her art from her early and middle careers. It also assures her power to handle the poetic form to her utmost advantage.