INTRODUCTION

Anna Akhmatova, whose real name was Anna Gorenko, has been recognized as one of the great Russian poets of all time. Her life span covers the time between the pre-Revolutionary and post-Stalin eras of Russian history. She was born in 1889, in Bolshoy Fontan, a suburb of Odessa on the Black Sea. The family moved to the North when she was eleven months old, eventually settling in the town of Tsarskoye Selo, near St. Petersburg, where Pushkin had attended the lyceé and her older contemporary, Innokenty Annensky was the schoolmaster. She witnessed as a child the reign of the last Russian Tsar, Nicholas II. But her childhood does not appear to have been happy. Her parents separated in 1905, her mother took her, with her four brothers and sisters, to live in the Crimea, and she completed her formal education in Kiev in 1908. She started writing poetry at the age of eleven, inspired by her favourite poets: Derzhavin and Nekrasov. But as her father did not want to see any of her verses printed under his respectable name, she had to adopt the surname of one of her Tartar ancestors as a pseudonym.

In 1910, Akhmatova married the poet, Nikolai Gumilev, and the couple visited Western Europe on their honeymoon. She made a return visit to Paris in 1911, and Amedeo Modigliani, still an unknown artist at that time, painted sixteen portraits of her. Also in 1911, a Poets' Guild was formed by Gumilev and others who felt that Symbolism, the prevailing trend in the poetry of the time, was tired and outmoded. Some of the Guild's members, including Gumilev, Gorodetsky, Mandelstam and Akhmatova, subsequently founded Acmeism, a movement that set itself against the vagueness and otherworldliness of the Symbolists. It was in such an enthusiastic
environment that her first collection, *Evening* (Vecher, 1912), was published. Her Acmeist clarity, conciseness, compressed style and precise details in *Evening* soon made her well-known in the St. Petersburg literary circle. It was at this time that she started often reading her poems at a cabaret in a St. Petersburg cellar called the Stray Dog Café.

The same year (1912) she found success as a poet, her son Lev was born. He was, however, soon taken away from her by his paternal grandmother, who disliked Akhmatova. Akhmatova protested this situation, but Gumilev took the side of his family. She would visit her son during holidays and summer. It was because of this background that Akhmatova later wrote that “Motherhood is a bright torture. I was not worthy of it.” In 1914, Akhmatova's second book, *Rosary* (Chetki), was published. It too earned immense popularity. A parlor game based upon the book was even invented. One person would recite a line of poetry and the next person would try to recite the next, until the entire book was recited. Though Akhmatova was now enjoying professional success, her personal life was falling apart. Her marriage to Gumilev— in trouble from the start— was failing. That year was a time of great tumult, politically, as well. World War I broke out in Europe, and in August, Germany declared war on Russia. Also, Akhmatova's beloved St. Petersburg was renamed as Petrograd. Her concern with all these factors was reflected in her collection, *White Flock* (Belaya Staya), which was published in 1917, the same year when the Bolshevik revolution took place and changed Russia forever. *Plantain* (Podorozhnik) was published the year the Civil War ended, in 1921. Already in 1918 she took divorce from Gumilev, and now, she married Vol’demar Shileiko, the next in a series of failed relationships in Akhmatova's life. Life, during these days, was, however, hard
for them, and like many, they too didn't have enough to eat, or enough fuel to keep warm. Anno Domini (1922), her next collection, was published during these hard days of her life.

The 1920s had brought an abrupt change in Akhmatova's fortunes. The brutal execution of Gumilev in August 1921, because of an alleged minor role against anti-Bolshevik plot, was a devastating personal blow. Indeed, it had shocked all the educated classes throughout the country, and made it clear that a very different epoch had started. In the subsequent months, Akhmatova's poetry was attacked roundly by critics. It was attacked as the representation of the peti-bourgeois culture which had no place in the new Communist society. The government formally established Socialist Realism as the guideline for all the arts. Writers were now required to evoke an ideal Socialist State, and lyric poetry, like that of Akhmatova, with the dominating content of love and religion, was regarded as harmful. In 1925, she was banned by an unofficial party resolution.4 During Joseph Stalin's regime in the 1930s, the terror peaked. The Stalinist Purges claimed millions of victims. Public-show trials were performed, where the accused were forced to read prepared confessions. Many of Akhmatova's friends and fellow writers were arrested or executed. In 1933, her son Lev was arrested, and again in 1935. None of Akhmatova's work was published in the Soviet Union between 1923 and 1940. Yet, unlike many of her contemporaries, Akhmatova refused to emigrate. During this time, she applied herself to the investigation of the life and works of Pushkin, producing some seminal articles published posthumously under the title On Pushkin (O Pushkine). She worked on The Reed (Trostnik, 1926-40) which contains poems on creation, and features dedications to the poets, Mandelshtam, Pasternak and Dante. From 1926 to
1940, she lived with the art critic, Nikolai Punin. The mass arrests of the 1930s which included Punin, along with her son, generated a long poem of lamentation to human suffering, *Requiem* (Rekviem, 1935-40), which was never published in the Soviet Union. In 1940, a collection of previously published poems, *From Six Books*, was published. A few months later, however, it was withdrawn. Her next long poem, the complex, dense, polyphonic *Poem without a Hero* (Poema bez geroya, 1940-65) was also published outside the Soviet Union. Here Akhmatova interprets the suicide of the poet and officer, Vsevolod Knyazev, as a sign of the times.

In 1941 when Germany declared war on Russia, Akhmatova was used for delivering a radio speech urging the women of Leningrad (formerly St. Petersburg/ Petrograd) to be courageous. Even though she was forbidden to publish her poems, she was asked by the government to speak because she symbolized Russian culture and was associated with the city of Leningrad. During the later part of World War II, Akhmatova was evacuated to Tashkent with other writers as well as artists and musicians.

At the outbreak of World War II, Stalin briefly relaxed his stance toward writers, and Akhmatova was published selectively. In 1946, however, Andrey Zhdanov, the Secretary of the Central Committee, denounced her and expelled her from the Writers' Union. This expulsion was prompted basically upon learning about the visit of the British liberal, Isaiah Berlin, to Akhmatova in 1946. When Akhmatova was expelled, it meant that her ration card was taken away. The poet had no means of support. She relied on her friends for the rest of her life. In 1949, her son Lev was arrested again and exiled to Siberia. He was not released until 1956. To try to win her son's release, Akhmatova now wrote a few poems in praise of Stalin and the
government, under the title *Glory to Peace*, but it was of no use. Later, she, however, requested that these poems should not appear in her collected works.

Following Joseph Stalin's death in 1953, Akhmatova was slowly rehabilitated. Her poetry was again published in 1958 and 1961, but with heavy censorship. After Pasternak's death in 1960, she had become the sole surviving poet of pre-Revolutionary Russian literature. In 1964, she went to Italy to receive a high literary prize and next year to Oxford to be awarded an honorary degree. Although she was now exhausted by a lifetime of fighting, she still loved beauty over everything else. In *The Last Rose* she wrote, "Lord! You see I am tired / Of living and dying and resurrection. / Take everything but grant that I may feel / The freshness of this crimson rose again." On March 5, 1966, she died peacefully, and ironically, it was the 12th anniversary of Stalin's death. Undoubtedly, Akhmatova had the most exciting eventful life—to quote her own words, she saw "events which had no equal". In Isaiah Berlin's words, "[Akhmatova's] entire life was what Herzen once described Russian literature as being: one continuous indictment of Russian reality."

Since the 1960s, Akhmatova and her poetry has remained till today a constant subject of curiosity and interest for the readers and scholars all over the world. She has been examined by scholars and admirers from different point of views. Among a few important biographical studies on her, special mention may be made of Amanda Haight's *Anna Akhmatova: A Poetic Pilgrimage* (1976), Jessie Davies' *Anna of All the Russias: The Life of Anna Akhmatova, 1889-1966* (1988), and Anatoly Nayman's *Remembering Akhmatova* (1991). Nayman's work, originally published in Russian in 1969, is a work of
the poet's literary secretary who witnessed her last years. Nayman here
condemns the official Soviet view of Akhmatova as a pessimistic sexual
deviant representative of useless reactionary values strange to Soviet
literature. Instead he identifies her capacity to joke even during those
dreadful years of horror and exposes the power of her erotic poetry. The first
book by Haight is a critical biography analyzing the relations of the poet's life
to her poetry. Haight's book brings out the portrait of a brave woman finding
in her poetry her source of strength and giving voice to the woman's point of
view in a culture where women's voices were few. The value of Haight's work
is seen to lie in its sensitive understanding of the tragic limitations and
restraints under which Akhmatova wrote, and in her skill in overcoming
these. Jessie Davies' book juxtaposes biography and poetry to provide a
moving tribute to Akhmatova's greatness. There is glittering account of her
terrible daily life, the turbulent, repressive politics, the personal losses, and
yet her ability to endure, create and overcome. She calls Akhmatova's theme
of wounded, idealized love unique—the first treatment of this theme in
Russia from a woman's point of view.

Konstantin Polivanov's *Anna Akhmatova and Her Circle* (1994) and Lydia
Chukovskia's *The Akhmatova Journals (1938-41)* (1994) are also important
accounts of the poet's life as well as her work. Polivanov's book contains
fifteen memoirs about Akhmatova by important friends and by Akhmatova
herself, and it provides several viewpoints on the daily struggles, heartbreaks,
starvations, and sufferings of the poet. There are accounts of the fearful
restraints of state-controlled publications, and the threats of confinement or
death from World War I through the Revolution, Civil War, and the terrible
1920s and 1930s to German invasion and post-War Stalinist purges. Together
these memoirs may be taken as a fascinating story of courage and friendship
in the face of terror, and of intellectual, literary and personal fights against
domination and stupidity. Lydia Chukovskia's work, on the other hand, may
be seen drawing heavily on her personal diaries and conversations with
Akhmatova to provide fascinating glimpses of Akhmatova's life and thought
during the critical, stressful period of Stalinist repressions. She had been a
close friend of Akhmatova since 1938 and her work displays not only her
deep knowledge of Russian history, literature and social conditions but also
the skills of a memoirist who personally memorized risky, even
uncompromising poems Akhmatova wrote and burnt, and who, without
sentimentality, attentively records lively, authentic details. Lydia
Chukovskia's work, thus, may be seen as a fascinating projection of the
courageous poet who quite heroically survived during those tough years of
terror and repression.

a thoughtful portrait of Akhmatova's tragic story. For Feinstein, the story of
Akhmatova's spectacularly difficult life is a reminder of the terrible price
exacted from human beings by fundamentalist ideas and revolutionary
creeds. At the same time, Feinstein makes it clear that Akhmatova is iconic
not of dissidence and resistance alone but as a poet of womanly feeling in a
brutal world. Feinstein mines the poetry for autobiographical content and
concentrates on Akhmatova's intimate and private life more than most critics
and biographers have done; and while there is a hint of voyeurism in her
probing of Akhmatova's erotic adventures and her suggestion of a lesbian
dimension to Akhmatova's love life, her approach seems justified by the
subject matter of so much of Akhmatova's poetry, and by the tendency of the
Russian critics to shy away from such topics.
Apart from these, another major study on Akhmatova is *Anna Akhmatova: Poet and Prophet* (1994) by Roberta Reeder, who has also edited and introduced the two-volume bilingual *Complete Poems of Anna Akhmatova*, translated by Judith Hemschemeyer (1990). Reeder's work may be termed as the poet's most complete biography to date, three times as long as Amanda Haight's *Anna Akhmatova: A Poetic Pilgrimage*. The writer draws her materials from numerous sources. The bibliography itself reflects the eight decades of Akhmatova reception, including the spate of publications around and since the poet's centennial in 1989. The book's prologue, thirteen chapters, and epilogue follow Akhmatova's arduous life journey in short spans devised mostly to the corresponding periods in the cultural-political history of her country (e.g., *The Twilight of Imperial Russia: 1914-1917; The Great Terror: 1930-1939; The Thaw; 1953-1958*), with two chapters organized around the poet's interactions with renowned fellow poets, especially Pasternak and Brodsky, and one containing extensive commentaries on the *Poem without a Hero*, her most obscure and disputed work. Reeder's approach to biography writing is disarmingly simple. Image creation is not part of her active vocabulary. She uses the word 'prophet' in the sense that since the 1960s, she observes, Akhmatova's spiritual legacy has become a powerful cultural institution. The way she struggled against the Russian intelligentsia and survived the turmoil and complexities of her times makes her triumphant.

Important personal reminiscences about Akhmatova are to be found also in the moving account by Osip Mandelstam's widow, Nadezhda Mandelstam, *Hope against Hope: A Memoir* (trans. 1970). Helen Muchnic's, *Russian Writers: Notes and Essays* (1971), has an interesting discussion of Anna Akhmatova and her contemporaries. In an introduction to her poems, what Josephy Brodsky, the Soviet poet, wrote on Akhmatova is also significant:
"They will survive because language is older than state and because prosody always survives history. In fact, it hardly needs history; all it needs is a poet, and Akhmatova was just that." Brodsky observed that Akhmatova was unusual among modern Russian poets in that she arrived in the world with an already established diction and her own unique sensibility. She came fully equipped and never resembled anyone. But what finally matters is what she did with that sensibility and that diction, and the way she responded to the huge responsibility placed on her shoulders by Russian history. What makes the contemplation of her life and work so genuinely uplifting, according to Brodsky, is that it demonstrates the victory of art over politics, the moral and historical superiority of truths to lies. Akhmatova was one of a quartet of Great Russian poets—Tsvetaeva, Mandelstam, and Pasternak were the others—who overcame all obstacles to bear witness to the enduring resilience of the human soul.

In Max Hayward and Stanley Kunitz's 34-page introductory biographical essay, included in their bilingual anthology, Poems of Akhmatova (1973), the facts are combined and brought to bear on each other with the kind of aesthetic insight which can go far to restore the pattern of truth underlying the numerous gossips that confront Akhmatova's biographers at so many junctures. Intellectual clarity and aesthetic insight may be seen also in Andrey Sinyavsky's introductory essay to Richard McKane's anthology, Akhmatova's Poems: A Selection (1969). In his memoir, Anna Akhmatova, (Grand Street, Vol. 8, No. 3, Spring, 1989), Henry Gifford also observes that the old age of the poet was marked by a dignity not often witnessed in present days. She had made herself the recorder of a common experience, almost too dreadful to contemplate, unless it could be shown not to have destroyed the humanity that has always shone through the great works of Russian literature.
Akhmatova was answerable to Pushkin and to the language he had given as a lifeline. Not to have failed in this charge was her glory.

Apart from these critical biographical works and memoirs, Akhmatova's poetry too may be seen receiving immense critical response from scholars and critics all over the world. Coming to her early poetry, Dr Wendy Rosslyn's *The Prince, the Fool and the Nunnery: Religion and Love in the Early Poetry of Anna Akhmatova* (1984) has viewed Akhmatova's early thematic concerns from quite a different angle. The author takes up the first five books of Akhmatova's early poetry and has studied the themes of these books in close relation to one another. She has also given the readers close readings of many poems by carefully translating them herself into English from the original Russian. She concentrates chiefly on the persona of Akhmatova's heroine in her early poems and finds that everywhere, whether it is love or a withdrawal to religion or something else, Akhmatova's heroine succeeds in maintaining a detachment from the poet's own biography. The title of the book has been drawn from Akhmatova's short lyric, *Reading Hamlet* (1909). The impression that strikes us as regards the image of the heroine here is that she has been rejected by her prince or lover. The heroine, however, does not find the prince's rejection tragic: her ironic representation of the prince's own words (as it was done by Ophelia in *Hamlet*) shows that she owns the ability to withdraw herself from her lover. Of course, Dr Wendy takes this poem as indicative of the Akhmatova heroine's relation to her lover in many other poems, and discusses, as against this background, her withdrawal to Muse, or God, or some other Ideal. Dr Wendy finds, however, the same kind of detachment everywhere, as she finds it in representation of general religious aspects instead of pure Christianity in many of her poems.
In a Shattered Mirror: The Later Poetry of Anna Akhmatova by Susan Amert (1992), on the other hand, is devoted to the later, post-1935 poetry of Akhmatova which, according to the writer, has received, with the exception of Poem without a Hero, surprisingly little critical attention. The later poetry, Susan observes, differs radically from the sublimely transparent lyrical miniatures of the early period, most strikingly in its manifestation of difficulty and complexity, in its often self-conscious opacity. The main reason for the difficulty of the later poetry is its saturation with literary quotations and allusions, and a major focus of Susan's study is the complex role played in Akhmatova's poetics by these references. In contrast to the relative lyrical homogeneity of the early period, the later poetry is very diverse, featuring lengthy elegies and playful odes, innovative narrative poems and poetic cycles, as well as an array of disparate dictions and tones—ranging from bitter invective to a coldly distanced irony to what could be called an otherworldly lyricism. At the same time, the relatively unified image of the lyrical persona in the early verse is fragmented in the later period into a multiplicity of masks and guises. Susan Amert indeed approaches the poetics of Akhmatova's later work through close readings of major texts, and everything that bears on the creation of a given text she considers relevant to its interpretation. The poetics of Akhmatova's later work was shaped by sociopolitical, moral-philosophical, and religious concerns, no less than by aesthetic ones, and one of Susan's aims has been to illuminate the multifaceted relations of these poems to both the socio-political context and the literary tradition to which they belong.

In Sharon Leiter's Akhmatova's Petersburg (1983), the author's concern is the theme of Petersburg-Leningrad in the poetry of Akhmatova. In Leiter's view, Akhmatova inherited the Petersburg-Leningrad myth through the most precious legacy of such illuminating figures of the tradition as Pushkin,
Dostoevsky, Gogol, Blok, etc., and later, as her poetic practices reveal, she herself became as significant as her predecessors in the Petersburg literary history. In the first chapter of Leiter’s book, *The Early Petersburg Love Poems*, Leiter finds that in the early love lyrics “the artistic significance of Akhmatova’s Petersburg depends, not on the accuracy of her observations, but on the figurative uses to which they have been put.”¹⁰ Leiter quotes numerous relevant lines from Akhmatova’s poems to illustrate her points. Everywhere she draws lines from the poems to show that Akhmatova’s Petersburg is never mere passive ornament or backdrop for the love-motif revealed in the poems. In the early collections, Petersburg is “perceived in terms of spatial dichotomies which separate the heroine from her beloved and the realm of love from that of nonlove.”¹¹

Chapter two, *The Historical City in Transition* takes up different significant periods in the course of Petersburg’s history and associates them with the poetic practice of Akhmatova. Leiter observes that the renamed Petrograd—even the name itself—never appears anywhere in Akhmatova; but in many poems, Akhmatova may be seen exploiting religious imagery associated with Petersburg. During the period of war and revolution, on the other hand, Petersburg became, for Akhmatova, the fearful image of wilderness; and during all these moments, Leiter finds, she was constantly in worry as to preserve the eternal city against the image of harshness and wilderness. In chapter three, *The Terror and the War*, Leiter refers to the phoenix-like arousal of Petersburg as saved from demolition. Here she suggests that faith in Petersburg’s endurance during the terror and the war is bound up with its role as repository of the great Russian word. The focus is mainly on *Requiem* and Leiter finds that the very image of this city informs the whole poem from the beginning till its end. Chapter four, *The Postwar City*
takes up the return to Leningrad following evacuation, while chapter five, *Poem without a Hero* examines the many-layered Petersburg vision in this most significant poem. To quote Dr Leiter: "In the immense integrative task she set for herself, Petersburg was her central unifying symbol: the place where past, present, and future; living and dead; art, personal biography, and national destiny were to meet and intertwine". Of course, Dr Leiter leads on her discussions through detailed analysis of all those different aspects that have merged in this most critical work of Akhmatova. With all these, Dr Leiter's book may be termed as a sincere as well as an interesting study on the poet's both physical and literary attachment with Petersburg.

Kees Verheul's *The Theme of Time in the Poetry of Anna Akhmatova* (1971) is another significant research work on the poetry of Akhmatova. As Verheul has seen, while it is true that an almost obsessive concern with the experience of the realities of time both on a personal and a historical level forms one of the most characteristics features of Akhmatova's later poetry, an awareness of time is by no means absent from her earlier verse. An acute awareness of the intricacies of time as the stuff of human experience is characteristic of Akhmatova's poetry from the very beginning. In the early books the unifying theme of love has often been presented in various peculiar temporal perspectives. In the later poetry, this consciousness of time is brought more and more into the thematic centre of her poetry. Verheul's study carefully examines the function of various motifs of time in Akhmatova's poetry.

*The Guest from the Future: Anna Akhmatova and Isaiah Berlin*, by Georgi Dalos, translated by Antony Wood (2001) may be seen as a study of Akhmatova's literary fall and redemption. Dalos' book details the reverberations (real and imagined) of Akhmatova's lone visit in 1945 with the British historian of ideas, Isaiah Berlin, the most damaging of which was the
harsh denunciation of her poetics by the Central Committee of the Party (Communist Party of the Soviet Union) that essentially censored her. But it is really the blurred line between Anna Akhmatova's real and imagined worlds that Dalos seems interested in and captures most successfully. Dalos draws attention to an abbreviated telephone conversation in 1956 between Berlin and Akhmatova that reveals how aware Akhmatova was of this blurred line and how freighted her language had become with the sense of her own fate as a Soviet poet. Throughout their conversation, Akhmatova cryptically refers to a Chekov's story, *W ard No.6*, as representative of the general plight of Soviet writers and citizens. In the story, Rogin, a lonely doctor in a mental asylum, initially justifies his own inhumanity to his patients by absurdly claiming that so long as asylums exist, someone must fill them. But as Gyogy Dalos points out, Chekhov's story also resonated on the personal level for Akhmatova as a symbol of her earlier meeting with Berlin in 1945. In *W ard No.6*, Rogin comes to view his paranoid patient as the companion he has been waiting for, someone with whom he can share a kind of communion. The point is this, Rogin says, we see in each other people capable of thought and judgment, and that gives us solidarity together, no matter how different our individual views may be. As Dalos makes clear, the same might have been said of Akhmatova's view of her relationship with Berlin, around whom, after 1945, her poetics wound. And like Rogin, who is denounced and eventually committed to his own asylum because of this solidarity with his patient, Akhmatova found herself partially imprisoned by her meeting with Berlin, both politically (she felt her son was imprisoned because of her dissident status) and personally (she was not able to be with the companion she had waited for, so she idealized him in her poetry). *The Guest from the Future* is compelling as a chronicle of the absurdities of Soviet life and letters. It reveals,
amazingly, Stalin's early interests in avant-garde poetry -- his love of Walt Whitman's poetry, in particular -- in contrast to his condemnation of the same movement later, when he felt it politically necessary.

The Poetry of Anna Akhmatova: Living in Different Mirrors (2006) by Alexandra Harrington again has examined Akhmatova's works in the postmodern context. Harrington has interestingly noted a general tendency among critics and scholars to regard Akhmatova as relatively safe and conservative, a classical Russian poet. She, however, deviates from such critics and finds that although the term postmodernism cannot be applied to Akhmatova's later period wholesome or without reservation; it has the benefit of acknowledging that she moves beyond modernism in her later verse. To view her poetry in the light of appropriate constructions of postmodernism aids an appreciation of the ways in which her later period detaches itself from the earlier. The term postmodernist particularly relates to her Poem without a Hero, which is consciously concerned with evaluating the modernist past and restoring connections with a lost context, thus corresponding closely to theoretical models of early Russian postmodernism.

Another important book that concentrates on a few central problems in the poetry of Akhmatova is Anna Akhmatova: 1889—1989: Papers from the Akhmatova Centennial Conference (1989). The book contains 17 articles and among them there are some important research-articles that have explored the varied aspects of Akhmatova's texts. While some of the articles are written in the Russian language, many of the English articles have their main focus on Akhmatova's Poem without a Hero alone. Sam N Driver's article Anna Akhmatova and the Poetic Sequence views her Poem without a Hero and Requiem from quite a new viewpoint. He has included these two longer poems of Akhmatova in the new genre of the poetic sequence and finds that the poet's
creative impulse is the key that lends strength and energy to their organizations.

Both Leslie O’ Bell and Inna Chechelinitisky in their articles—Akhmatova and Pushkin’s Secret Writing and Akhmatova and Pushkin: 'Apologia Pro Vita Sua' respectively—are seen to work almost in the same line. In their works, they have established a connection of Akhmatova’s own works, specially her Poem without a Hero, with her studies on Pushkin. For Chechelinitisky, the whole poem is a kind of self-confession, while O’ Bell sees it as a kind of secret writing. Their studies of the poem suggest that its texture was inspired by Akhmatova’s studies on Pushkin, especially her devoted search for secret biographical meanings in the writings of Pushkin.

Another important contribution which discusses the trait of self-quotations in the poetry of Akhmatova is Anna Akhmatova’s Requiem: A Retrospective of the Love Lyric and Epos by Anna Ljunggren. As Ljunggren shows, Akhmatova makes extensive use of words and elements of her early love-lyric also in her later civic poetry. This she has termed as the trait of self-quotations and she finds that it does not suggest a repetitive tendency on the part of the poet. The poet did so quite consciously and she did it only to welcome new effects to her works.

The later poetry of Akhmatova is also the focus of David Wells’s article The Function of the Epigraph in Akhmatova’s Poetry. Wells explains the frequent use of epigraphs in the later poetry of Akhmatova as a growing concern for the Russian cultural heritage. Of course, these are all new viewpoints which are capable of supplying quite new insight to the conventional Akhmatovian studies.

Akhmatova has been assessed again in Barbara Heldt’s book, Terrible Perfection: Women and Russian Literature (1987) from a quite different
perspective. Heldt finds a pattern in Akhmatova's poetry in which the heroine partially triumphs and wholly survives through giving to a lesser duty, a memory, to history and time. Taking some of her poems, including the *Northern Elegy*, Heldt shows how place and memory, space and time are embodied in the different selves of the poet. The elegies grieve the loss and displacement, but offer as compensation the self's consciousness of its own endurance. Heldt examines Akhmatova in the female tradition of Russian poetry and finds that Akhmatova has used something reminiscent of the traditional female lament. In Beth Holmgren's *Women's Works in Stalin's Time: on Lydia Chukovskaia and Nadezhda Mandelstam* (1993), Akhmatova's scrutiny of women's unofficial roles may be seen looming large. In Catriona Kelly's *A History of Russian Women's Writing: 1820-1992* (1998), there is authentic survey of Akhmatova's manipulative appreciation of women poet's roles.

Apart from these, there are also some important research articles that supply new insight to the studies on Akhmatova's poetic works. *Boris Anrep and the Poems of Anna Akhmatova* by Wendy Rosslyn (*The Modern Language Review*, Vol. 74, No. 4, October, 1979) critically assesses the influence of the relation between Anrep and Akhmatova over the latter's poetry. Boris Anrep is a shadowy figure in the poems of Anna Akhmatova, half disclosed and half concealed. A number of her poems bear a dedication to him; yet the poems habitually refer to events, places, and circumstances in a manner which assumes that the identity and significance of these things are as well known to the reader as they are to the poet -- which is not, of course, the case. Rosslyn is aware that the reader might be led to believe, falsely, that he is party to the poet's intimate thoughts and experiences. Akhmatova marks some of her poems with dedications to Anrep, but though she tells us that there are also others which relate to him, she does not tell us which they are. Information
about Anrep in commentaries on Akhmatova's poems has been sparse, and for this reason too he has remained enigmatic. Rosslyn, besides consulting recent publications of letters, memoirs, and biographies of prominent cultural figures, has depended also on Anrep's own memoirs and other papers which are in the hands of his family. Together with internal literary evidence she takes help of this biographical material so that it is possible to posit which particular poems refer to him. Thus she labours hard in her study to return to the question of fact and myth in Akhmatova's poems.

In *Akhmatova and Pushkin: The Genres of Elegy and Ballad* (*The Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol. 71, No. 4, October, 1993), David Wells finds that Akhmatova not only relies heavily on the thematic contexts of poems by Pushkin and others, she also uses their work as a touchstone for compositional aspects of her writing. Wells' focus in this study is on the influence on Akhmatova of the early nineteenth-century poetic tradition, and of Pushkin in particular, within the framework of the structural models that are presented by the generic categories of the elegy and the ballad. In case of the elegy and the ballad, Wells observes, it is more accurate to speak of the influence of the 'Pushkinian tradition' than of the direct and exclusive influence of Pushkin. With the elegy, borrowings from Pushkin often merge with those from the other early nineteenth-century elegists, particularly Baratynsky. Similarly, with the ballad, the example of Pushkin is combined with the influence of the forms of folk literature and of other practitioners of the literary ballad. Akhmatova adapts or rejects material from both generic traditions far less self-consciously than with the poema, incorporating elements from both traditions in her narrative as well as her lyric verse. Akhmatova's response to the models of elegy and ballad available to her from the Pushkinian tradition took a wide variety of forms. Although her poetry
does not follow genre divisions in any strict sense, she very often adopted stylistic and formal features from both genres to correspond to specific demands in her own writing in the same way that she adapted thematic contexts through epigraphs and quotations. Formal parallels may serve to emphasize the thematic contexts provided by these, but in many cases they provide further layers of resonance, further horizons of meaning themselves. In general, the formal example of the nineteenth-century tradition was highly productive for Akhmatova and important in the genesis of a very large number of her works.

_The Poet in the Trenches: The Complete Poems of Anna Akhmatova_ (Literary Review, Summer, 1994) by Ervin C. Brody has seen Akhmatova as one of the heroic dissidents. In the shifting political landscape, Anna Akhmatova and her great contemporaries—Pasternak and Mandelstam gave a moving and insightful account of the polarization of society and the discordant intensity of life in the former Soviet Union. To them, poetry appeared as a medium of social and spiritual redemption, and their idea of ultimately building a new society was essentially an aesthetic and even mystical process rather than a political one. They offered a basis for sanity and a moderate sort of salvation in a world full of suffering, cruelty, and chaos. Hence, the poems of Akhmatova and her colleagues are essential readings for anyone who wants to understand how Russia succumbed to a brutal dictatorship and how it survived. Ervin C. Brody's article finds that as a result of the cultural and spiritual labours of Akhmatova and her equally famous friends for the continuity of the free poetic tradition in Russia, the past decades have witnessed a transformation in the consciousness and political thought of the people. Brody has rightly observed that despite the relative fortunes of the glasnost and perestroika in Russia, Akhmatova continues to be a unique
aspiration for the younger poets and writers of the land, who, at her death, expressed their sorrow and kept celebrating her artistic achievements.

In his review of Roberta Reeder-edited *The Complete Poems of Anna Akhmatova* by Judith Hemschemeyer (The Hudson Review, Vol. 44, No. 1, Spring 1991), Clarence Brown also takes up the influence of Pushkin on Akhmatova. As Brown finds, whenever reference to the tradition occurs in her work, it is a reference to Pushkin, and to his dual and antithetic iconic significance: the supreme artist of the Russian language and at the same time the rebellious, infinitely non-Russian, sexual brigand. It is no exaggeration to say that of all modern Russian poets, none so closely or so fruitfully identified with Pushkin as Akhmatova.

*An Elegy for Russia: Anna Akhmatova's Requiem* by Sharon M. Bailey (*The Slavic and East European Journal*, Vol. 43, No. 2, Summer, 1999) examines Akhmatova's poem as a requiem. At first glance, Akhmatova's *Requiem* would seem to have little in common with either a requiem or an elegy, for the son had not died, and in fact, very little is said about the son personally. However, despite the lack of funeral or eulogistic elements, Bailey observes, many of the most fundamental elegiac conventions can be found in the cycle. The loss of the loved one, usually by death in a traditional elegy, is represented by arrest in *Requiem*, while the universal significance of that loss is intimately tied to the theme of the universality of death. Besides, many of the images in *Requiem* spring from the author's experience of and need to express grief, and most can be understood as permutations of elegiac conventions. Yet even while much of *Requiem* can be understood within the paradigm of the traditional elegy, the unique circumstances of the Terror also add a moral aspect to the process of elegiac commemoration. Akhmatova's articulation of her son's as well as her own suffering is a monument to the suffering of an entire nation.
Some Observations on Allegory in Akhmatova's Early Poetry by Paul M. Waszink (The Slavic and East European Journal, Vol. 46, No. 4, Winter, 2002), studies aspects of the allegorical character of Akhmatova's poetry. Akhmatova's specific use of a double language-code makes her early poems allegorical. She uses both a general code and a personal code. The latter, although homophonous with the former, expresses the poet's personal ideas. The general code means that she expresses herself in understandable language, while the personal code means that she uses a personal style. The specific character of the poems lies in the fact that the reader's attention is continuously led away from the general to the personal code and back.

Michael Basker's 'Fear and the Muse': An Analysis and Contextual Interpretation of Anna Akhmatova's 'Voronez' (Soviet Literature, April, 1999), again, is an extensive study on one single poem by Akhmatova, Voronez (1936). The significance of Voronez as a poem on the threshold of Akhmatova's later period is undercut by its seeming ordinariness and compounded by its resistance to interpretation. These factors coupled with the relative paucity of critical attention accorded to it drew Basker's attention, for this resistance is a symptomatic consequence of Akhmatova's poetic method and her remarkable semantic density, which Basker addresses with elegance. He deals with Akhmatova's experience of history and the history of the text itself without neglecting the piece's versification and phonemic structure, which impact signification. Dating the lyric by the date of Akhmatova's return to Leningrad lends greater relief to the parallels interfacing Mandelstam's personal punishment with that of the entire ice-bound state as a political metaphor. As the centre for building Peter the Great's convoy before the founding of St Petersberg and the locus of his statue, the city of Voronez recalls the former northern Imperial capital not only through its own monument of the emperor,
the Bronze Horseman, but also through the upraised arm of the Voronez- Peter, which evokes Soviet statues of Lenin and Stalin. Basker's treatment of symbolism is excellent as he refers to the poet's entire context: crows symbolizing death, the negative value of ice and glass, the latter traceable to Mandelstam, and the images of the poplars. This close study of one civic lyric against the vast backdrop of the poet's oeuvre and of Russian literature in general is really to be commended.

Alexandra K. Harrington's *Forking paths and other dramas: Postmodernist features of Anna Akhmatova's "This Cruel Age has Deflected Me"* (Russian Literature, Volume 1, January 2006) focuses on some of the central issues raised by Akhmatova's later work — including her unconventional use of the poetic persona — through the prism of her well-known elegy *This Cruel Age has Deflected Me*. This lyric manifests a peculiarly postmodernist sensibility when viewed in the light of certain theoretical constructions of postmodernism. The argument draws on the work of the American theorist Brian McHale, who finds that postmodernist writing is characterized by a concern with ontology, in that it offers imaginative constructions of different possible worlds and thus, confronts outworld with other worlds that lie adjacent or parallel to it. This model of postmodernism aids an interpretation of Akhmatova's elegy, in which she meditates on historical disjunction and writes her own alternate-world story by exploring the memory of that which has not happened. This understanding of *This Cruel Age has Deflected Me* in turn sheds light on Akhmatova's later period more generally: the projection of different orders of being is a prevalent device, closely related to Akhmatova's sense of living a posthumous existence.

Boris Katz's article, *To What Extent is Requiem a Requiem? Unheard Female Voices in Anna Akhmatova's Requiem* (Russian Review, Vol. 57, No. 2,
April, 1998) examines the influence of the well-known Latin requiem, *Stabat Mater* in it. *Stabat Mater* too, like Akhmatova's poem, exposes the story of a mother-son tragedy, and hence, Katz has considered it as the hidden subtext of Akhmatova's poem. Drawing upon the texts of both the works, Katz comes to the conclusion that Akhmatova's *Requiem* is not a requiem proper, for it deals with the dream of glory on earth, not heavenly glory. Katz also explains the possible reasons why Akhmatova concealed this subtext for her poem. One of the important reasons was that *Stabat Mater* was too closely connected with Catholic liturgy, which was not seen favorably by the Soviet authorities.

James B. Woodward, in his article, *Semantic Parallelism in the Verse of Akhmatova*, (The Slavic and East European Journal, Vol. 15, No. 4, Winter, 1971) has examined how Akhmatova's choice of images, words or phrases parallel the persona's intensely felt emotions and sentiments. Like other critics, Woodward also observes that by the time Akhmatova began to publish, her method was already clearly defined. Taking some of the poems by Akhmatova for illustration, Woodward shows that it was a technique of semantic architecture which involves the accumulation of sharp sensory responses evoked and enhanced by implicit or, less commonly, explicit contrasts and paralleling the emotional intensity of the recaptured moment.

Sonia I. Ketchian, another prominent name in the contemporary Akhmatovian studies, has to her credit different articles on different aspects of Akhmatova's poetry. In her *Akhmatova's Civic Poem "Stansy" and Its Pushkinian Antecedent* (The Slavic and East European Journal, Vol. 37, No. 2., Summer, 1993), she has analysed Akhmatova's poem *Stances* first in terms of its obvious Pushkinian predecessor and then in terms of its structure and content. She has, for instance, shown that Akhmatova employs Pushkin's device of juxtaposing the present ruler (Stalin) with Peter, leaving out the
specifics. In structural balance and meaningful sound instrumentation also Pushkin was her inspiration and Ketchian's article nicely brings out that like Pushkin, Akhmatova is also in the best tradition of the Russian aesthetic imagination. Another important article, *Metempsychosis in the Verse of Anna Axmatova* (The Slavic and East European Journal, Vol. 25, No. 1, Spring, 1981), examines that Akhmatova's use of metempsychosis for the persona serves a definite purpose. In short, metempsychosis maintains that the soul undergoes several transformations in different bodies, both human and nonhuman, ultimately attaining higher forms of life. Representative of metempsychosis in Akhmatova's works is the phenomenon of nonmeetings which become more prominent after the twenties whereby the soul of the lover who has died, or as merely distant, can leave the body and visit the persona at night. Metempsychosis, thus, serves as the additional facet and the changes in the persona become clear through it. In a broader sense, metempsychosis represents the same for the persona of Akhmatova's verse as literary tradition does for poetry and the poet, enabling an individual, the lyrical ego, to experience several stages of life retaining all the while the memory associated with each life span. In Akhmatova's poem, *By the Sea-Shore* (1915), a personified image of creative writing voices this notion: "I remember everything at one and the same time". Indeed, Ketchian's study brings out how Akhmatova expanded the limits of her own verse by the use of metempsychosis and subtexts as well. In another article, *A Source for Anna Axmatova's "A String of Quatrains": Hovannes Tumanian's Quatrains* (The Slavic and East European Journal, Vol. 31, No. 4, Winter, 1987), Ketchian shows that in connecting a number of separate quartrains in the cycle *A String of Quatrains* in her last collection of verse, *Seventh Book*, Akhmatova developed a new poetic form, and in doing so, she followed a source outside Russian literature, Hovannes
Tumanian's Quatrains. Hovannes Tumanian was the Armenian poet and certain qualities of Akhmatova's A String of Quatrains, Ketchian shows, can only have come from Tumanian—particularly grouping the quartrains into a cycle and using the genre name. Of course, Ketchian's study draws parallels with Tumanian's Quatrains in order to understand better the workings of Akhmatova's creative process. The mass murders of the Armenians as revealed in Tumanian's Quatrains have been paralleled, for instance, with the political liquidation of Soviet citizens referred to in Akhmatova's poem. Ketchian finally establishes that following Hovannes Tumanian, who compositionally and thematically drew on a long tradition of codified quartrains, Akhmatova elevated the significance of the quartrain in Russian literature. Ketchian's study, thus, is an illuminating one throwing light on Akhmatova's concerns with the genre. In Reference Guide to Russian Literature, edited by Neil Cornwell and Nicole Christian (1998), Ketchian has contributed her evaluatory articles on Akhmatova's Evening, Rosary, and White Flock.

Jeanne van der Eng-Liedmeier and Kees Verheul, editors of Tale without a Hero and Twenty-Two Poems by Anna Akhmatova (1973) have added two illuminating essays to their book. In her 50-page essay on Akhmatova's Poem without a Hero, Jeanne may be observed highlighting the poet's thematic concerns in this major poem. Especially the occult but deeply significant theme of retribution for an abstract guilt blended of the personal and the societal, owed by the pre-War era and paid in blood and desolation has been traced with authority. The twenty two poems of the title, all thematically linked, on the other hand, afford a starting point for Verheul's 38-page essay, Public Themes in the Poetry of Anna Akhmatova. His ambitious goal is to trace some of the lines of evolution of Akhmatova's whole verse oeuvre by examining genetically linked poems from different stages of her development.
Verheul, of course, directs his scrutiny to that portion of Akhmatova's work which by its vatic generality and prophetic tone tints her as a civic poet. Among the various elements which are found by Verheul to go into the blend of the civic poems, mention may be made of the critical presence of a first person singular that exemplifies or distills the experience of personal suffering and loss; this person being not a disembodied or random figure, but a lyrical heroine linked by some constant biographical traits with the poet's "I", yet not identical with it. Another element is that of the effective use of folklore and ecclesiastically coloured rhetoric, by which the lyrical persona appears as the quintessential Slavic woman of a timeless present-past: devout, simple, indomitable through faith. Verheul's study is indeed revelatory of new dimensions in Akhmatovian studies.

A few important articles on Akhmatova may also be found in the Akhmatova-issue of *Soviet Literature (April, 1989)*. This issue, besides containing a selection from Akhmatova, highlights articles and essays from such scholars as Lev Ozerov, Mark Bazhenov, Vitali Vilenkin among others. In Lev Ozerov's article *Touches to Akhmatova's Portrait*, an objective attempt has been made to evaluate Akhmatova as a poet. As Ozerov has seen, the main features of Akhmatova's poetry are also to be found in her prose. Insight into the human soul, aphoristic style, elegance and virility—all this applies equally to Akhmatova's prose and poetry. The differences are only the differences of genre. Ann Kurt and John Crowfoot, in their article, *Akhmatova and Translation*, again, views different risks involved in the attempts to translate Akhmatova's works into other languages, especially English. Mark Bazhenov, in *Moscow and Moscovites in the Life of Akhmatova*, on the other hand, may be seen assessing the influence of Moscow and its long, rich traditions of
poetry in Akhmatova's poetic career. Apart from these, this issue has reprinted the famous article by Nikolai Nedobrovo, which Akhmatova considered to be the last to be the ever best thing written about her.

In Gary Saul Morson-edited *Literature and History: Theoretical Problems and Russian Case Studies* (1986), there are two articles *Torture by Happiness* and *Cloudburst of Light*, where Akhmatova's works have been examined along with those of her contemporaries. In *Cloudburst of Light*, Akhmatova's works have been seen as a counterpart to that of Pasternak while *Torture by Happiness* views Akhmatova's poetic resistance of all those factors that stood on the poet's liberty as well as happiness. In the introduction to the book, *Poem without a Hero* (1989), Lenore Mayhew has seen Akhmatova's later poetry as epics of persecution because of its ability to record a large part of the common human experience of the twentieth century.

E. J. Brown's *Major Soviet Writers: Essays in Criticism* (1973) also contains two seminal essays on Akhmatova: Korney Chukovsky's *Akhmatova and Mayakovský* and Andrey Sinyavsky's *The Unshackled Voice: Anna Akhmatova*. According to Andrey Sinyavsky, Akhmatova's poetry, inspite of the muted orchestration, reveal a character of vast, massive, almost monumental stature. They are more than is usually assumed—the outcry of a hurt, humiliated and indignant woman: beyond the shrill tirade of the woman is the artist, the unshackled voice, the scope of whose personality it reveals. In Korney Chukovsky's article, on the other hand, the differences between Akhmatova and Mayakovský has been seen not just a difference between two poets but rather a contrast between two different worlds. Akhmatova has been seen as the heir of all the precious riches of pre-Revolutionary Russian poetry, while Mayakovský as the product of the present revolutionary epoch.
As Chukovsky has found, the two elements are not mutually exclusive; rather they complement one another, and both are equally necessary.

In the introduction to the anthology of Akhmatova's works complied by Tom Btopon (1968), Alexis Rannit has examined Akhmatova in the context of Art Nouveau. Rannit finds these characteristics of her early poetry that speak of her association with Art Nouveau: excessive self-analysis, experience with private sensations, neurosis, erotic sensuality, scorn of contemporary society, post-romantic irony in the manner of Degas and Laforgue whom she venerated when young, and a nostalgic semi-mysticism, often without a clear moral commitment. Rannit also draws her distinction from other Art Nouveau poets and artists. As he has shown, contrary to many Art Nouveau poets and artists, she was not interested in jewel-like ornamentation, exotic vocabulary, complex and manneristic structure, and aestheticism with a strong accent on art for art's sake.

The number of such significant works on Akhmatova is, however, relatively small. Often there may be seen different types of shortcomings in the approaches of the scholars. David N Wells' 192-page book *Anna Akhmatova: Her Poetry* (1996), which is an attempt to study the different thematic concerns of the poet, may be taken as an example. Throughout all the seven chapters in which the book has been designed, the writer explores compositional patterns and latent thematic cycles formed by the poems in Akhmatova's collections. Though the book familiarizes us with many new observations, yet there are some lapses. Wells has not, for example, anywhere in his book, attempted to show the interdependence of the different thematic cycles under what might be called the framework of a life-philosophy consistent throughout the poet's creative life. By his discovery of the different
themematic cycles in Akhmatova’s poetry, he disapproves generalization and hence no attempt is there in the book to view her as part of a broader philosophical and aesthetic panorama of her time. It is interesting to note that among her contemporaries, she has been correlated only with Gumilev and this is indeed a major drawback in Wells’ study.

Dr Ronald Hingley’s *Nightingale Fever: Russian Poets in Revolution* (1982) may also provide incompleteness in assessments of Akhmatova and her works. In this book, Dr Hingley has taken up Akhmatova along with three of her contemporaries—Mandelstam, Pasternak, and Tsvetayeva. The logic that works behind the selection of these four different poets in one single volume is clear—they were sharers of almost the same socio-political experiences of their times, they had personal contacts with one another and they also took interest in one another’s writings. In his book, Dr Hingley, combining biography and contemporary history, has written the story of these poets “as a quartet of closely linked individuals”.15 He has not taken up these poets separately one after another; instead he takes up each of them against the background of the same period of years. The design of Dr Hingley’s book, thus, is both innovative and attractive—yet it must be admitted that he does not maintain the balance throughout. In contrast to the detailed discussion of the period before 1940, the period from the death of Tsvetayeva in 1941 to those of Pasternak in 1960 and Akhmatova in 1966 have been covered only in eleven pages. Dr Hingley argues that with the deaths of Mandelstam and Tsvetayeva, the story of the four poets as a quartet of closely linked individuals also comes to an end. This argument, however, is unconvincing, because innumerable associations to their dead colleagues may easily be found out in anything by Pasternak or Akhmatova of the post-War period.
Indeed Dr Hingley’s overemphasis on the poets and their poetry before 1940 has affected his estimate on Pasternak and Akhmatova also. In case of Pasternak, for example, his relationship with the Futurists has been described very briefly while the Zhdanov affair—which was one of the most decisive factors that shaped Akhmatova’s later years—has not received the detailed treatment that it should have received. Dr. Hingley is also silent on such important subjects as Akhmatova’s poetry of the post-War period and her devoted studies on Pushkin. Even her most critical significant work *Poem without a Hero* also gets only a hasty treatment from Dr Hingley. All these make the writer’s assessment weak as well as incomplete.

Sometimes, on the other hand, there may be perceived tendencies of using Akhmatova for the different ideologies the scholars represent themselves. Those who want to serve the cause of party-ideology, for instance, search in Akhmatova quite different things which are again of much less importance for the worshippers of Western individualism. This later tendency has recently been inspired much by the fall of the communist Soviet Republic, and hence so many works focusing on the poet’s lyricism, her concern with love and religion alone have been reported as being published in the West in recent years. The examples of such works include Bain Cammeron’s 1997 book *Dominion over Death: Being, Time and Paradox in the Poetry of Anna Akhmatova*, published in New York, or *Gender and Creativity in Anna Akhmatova and Emily Dickinson* by C. Ronald, published in London, 1999. In India too, the discourse on Akhmatova may be seen influenced by differences of opinion and ideologies. In Borish Shub’s *The Writer and the State: A Documentary Study of the Literary Revolt in Russia*, published in 1958, by the Institute of Political and Social Studies, Calcutta, Akhmatova has been viewed merely as an example of a writer tortured mercilessly on the question of her
quality of work that was not up to the expectations of the state. Of course, many more examples may be added to such imbalanced approaches to Akhmatova and her poetry. Keeping in view all such approaches, the present study is an attempt to evaluate her poetic worth from a quite different viewpoint, so that her true achievement and significance get estimated objectively. Hence, the subject of her adherence to the rich Russian tradition shall be the focal point of discussion. It may be seen that when Zhdanov condemned her poetry as belonging to the old regime and dismissed the dominant theme of love and the religious elements in her work, he was actually refuting her adherence to the tradition. The Bolsheviks, including Zhdanov, regarded such adherences to the tradition as something self-indulgent bourgeois preoccupations that can never incite progressive thoughts essential for the new state. Akhmatova, however, regarded such progress as something completely mechanical and her poetry, with its strong emphasis on the tradition, emerged just to oppose such progress. She came out to defend the secular image of the poet as one engaged in making the past, present and future a single, indivisible thread to withstand any ravages that might threaten it. In a dedicatory poem composed upon Akhmatova’s death, Evgeny Evtushenko, the famous Soviet poet, also emphasizes Akhmatova’s adherence to the tradition, observing that she “belonged to two eras” and that she “lay between the future and the past”.16 In his comparative study on Mayakovsky and Akhmatova, Korney Chukovsky too highlighted on Akhmatova’s “deep Old Russian soul”, stressing that Akhmatova possessed “that intellectual refinement and charm that are given to those who participate in a long cultural tradition”.17 Indeed, an earnest endeavour has, therefore, been made in this study to critically assess Akhmatova’s exploration of the riches of the tradition throughout her entire poetic career.
Though much have already been done on the poetry of Akhmatova, this study aims to evaluate her from an essentially Indian viewpoint, especially by comparing her with some major Indian poets.

The method for the study is mostly textual and analytical. For the convenience of treatment, the study has been divided into three chapters. The first chapter, Poetry of the Early Period (1900-1914), is committed to a critical estimate of Akhmatova's poetry of the Acmeist period. An adherence to the rich cultural and literary tradition of the past itself was one of the Acmeist ideals and a study of Akhmatova's poetry of this period makes it clear that Akhmatova had deliberately exploited this ideal to the extreme in her poetry, to save Russian poetry of the time from the jolt of the otherworldly and mystic Symbolists. In the light of an analysis of her themes and stylistic features of this period, an attempt has been made in this chapter to highlight and analyze the different influences, both oral and literary, over her.

The second chapter, Poetry of the Middle Period (1914-1930), attempts to underline first the various shifts in the style and thematic concerns of the Akhmatova of this period, especially in the background of the constantly changing social and political environment of the time. Next it attempts to submit that her new reflective mood also displays her close association with the tradition. Taking up her significant poems of this period, an earnest endeavour has been taken up to elucidate how she often relates to the popular medieval religious texts or to the writers like Pushkin, or even Dante, for representation of her themes or subjects.

The third chapter, Poetry of the Later Period (1930-1966), attempts to submit it that by its exposure of the exact conditions of life and culture in the Russia of the 20th century, Akhmatova's work has now acquired an epical grandeur. Addressing such larger issues, as that of spelling out the public role
of the poet, or that of embodying her divided self in the background of a new framework of time and space, she has now appeared as vibrant as an experimentalist, yet it may be observed that she is still through and through a traditionalist who turns, for example, to Pushkin, Nekrasov, or Blok for her stanza-form, or to Dostoevsky for a representation of her themes of guilt and redemption. A minute study of the major poems of her later period has been aimed at in this chapter to evaluate the later Akhmatova’s close association with the tradition.

Notes and References:

1 Akhmatova, Anna: *A Brief Word about Myself*, in *Soviet Literature*, April, 1989, pp- 6-7

2 Akhmatova, Anna: *Autobiographical Sketches*, in *Soviet Literature*, April, 1989, p-45

3 http://www.dybka.home.mindspring.com/jill

4 The 1925 resolution stated in clear and precise terms its control over the writers: “There is every reason to believe that a style consonant with the new era will be created, but it will be created by different methods, and so far there is no sign of a solution of this question. Any attempt to tie the Party down in this respect at the present stage of cultural development must be rejected.” in Hayward, Max & Labedz, Leopold (ed.): *Literature and Revolution in Soviet-Russia, 1917—1963*, O. U. P., London, 1963, p-ix

5 Zhadnov’s comments on Akhmatova: “Akhmatova’s subject matter is individualistic through and through. The range of her poetry is pathetically limited. It is the poetry of a half-crazy gentle lady who tosses between the bedroom and the chapel... half-nun and half-harlot, or rather both nun and harlot, her harlotry is mingled with prayer.” in
These forced confessions have no literary value, as Max Hayward mentions, "The worst punishment Stalin inflicted on poets was not to kill and imprison them but make them praise him.", in Kunitz, Stanley and Max Hayward, trans. *Poems of Akhmatova*, Atlantic Monthly Press, Boston, 1973, p-25

Akhmatova, Anna: *A Brief Word about Myself*, in *Soviet Literature*, April, 1989, p-7


Ibid., p-15

Ibid., p-145


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