

Title: Unbound Time in Poetic Space: Compiling Temporality and Universality in Anna Akhmatova's Poetic Cycles

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Abstract:

Anna Akhmatova's oeuvre is exceptional when compared with many of her Silver Age contemporaries. Her relatively long life allowed her to compose verse well past the Second World War and Stalin's death and proved to accentuate her unique position in the Russian literary canon as a writer who cannot be defined by a single time period, yet whose identity is inseparable from a keen awareness of time. This project is an intervention into Akhmatova's poetics with a particular attention paid to her practices of self-fashioning through the reorientation and reevaluation of her own work later in life. This practice is particularly salient in her 1965 collection, *The Flight of Time (Beg Vremeni)*, however, it is equally important to include *Poem Without a Hero (Poema bez geroia)* in any discussion related to Akhmatova's poetic cycles, given that the epic was begun during the early 1940s but not completed until 1965. *Poema's* final part adds a layer of retrospective to a work that is otherwise temporally bound within the context of the Second World War, thus positioning the work in the realm of self-reflection and self-crafting. This move with *Poema* is not dissimilar to Akhmatova's reorganization of her lifetime of work into various cycles in her final collection, *The Flight of Time*, from which I will analyze the cycle "Secrets of the Craft" ("*Tainy remesla*"). Central to my analysis will be a comparative discussion of thematics of the individual poems (some of which were composed over twenty years apart from one another) vis a vis the cycle as a whole, as well as a discussion as to why the individual compositions were not bound to specific temporalities and were able to be read with poems written during vastly different social and political moments.