

Long Paddock

DAVID N. WELLS

A. D. Hope and the Poetics of Acmeism

In her recent book, *Flint on a Bright Stone*, Kirsten Blythe Painter has argued for a distinctive typology of literary modernism.¹ She identifies two separate strands of reaction to the international symbolist movement – one the avant-garde schools of Futurism, Expressionism and Dadaism, which she collectively calls “radical modernism”; the other a less strident, more moderate response which is equally international in character and which she terms “tempered modernism”. In Painter’s conceptualisation radical and tempered modernism share a distrust of Symbolist isolation and dreaminess. Both call for a return to concrete reality after the Symbolists’ abstraction and mysticism, and both call for a renewal of language and a focus on “the word as such”. But the two post-Symbolist tendencies differ substantially in their attitude to artistic form, their approach to tradition and in their understanding of the relationship between art and reality. On the one hand, the radical modernists, exemplified by Marinetti, Apollinaire, Khlebnikov, August Stramm and Gertrude Stein, tended to move away from mimetic representation, to emphasise the signifier over the signified through devices such as “parole in libertà” and “zaum” (trans-sense language) and, at least ostensibly, to reject the literary and artistic traditions of the past. On the other hand, the tempered modernists – who Painter identifies principally as the American Imagists (Pound, Williams and H.D.), the Russian Acmeists (Akhmatova, Gumilev and Mandelstam) and the Rilke of *Neue Gedichte* (New Poems) – remained fundamentally representational. They emphasised the existence of objects in their own right, stressing the importance of exactness in vocabulary and expression and took architecture rather than music as their touchstone. While they challenged the authority of their Symbolist predecessors, they retained Symbolist beliefs in the importance of poets as continuators of the cultural heritage and the value of literary scholarship, while at the same time constructing alternative patterns of allegiance to the writers of the past.

Painter’s version of the literary history of modernism can no doubt be challenged on points of detail, but it still provides a useful framework for the full understanding of modernism as an international phenomenon. Translated to an Australian context, and leaving aside both a certain belatedness and the local complications of both *Bulletin* and Jindyworabak nationalism, the Symbolist legacy of Christopher Brennan, Hugh McCrae and John Shaw Neilson (and continued in part by Kenneth Slessor and Robert Fitzgerald) gave way in the next generation on the one hand to the aggressive radical modernism of, for example, the *Angry Penguins* group, and on the other hand to the tempered modernism of their ideological opponents, represented most prominently by James McAuley, Harold Stewart and A. D. Hope.

“Modernism” is not a term that is much used in the critical literature to describe Hope’s work, though some writers who have taken a broad literary-historical view have employed it. Geoffrey Hartman, for example, describes Hope as one of those who “consolidate rather than advance the modernist revolution”, thus foreshadowing Painter’s division of the late movement into radical and tempered wings.² In Australian criticism “modernist” is most typically used to describe the “radical” modernist

tendencies of the 1940s and their inherited traditions, rather than the broader literary-historical movement. Hope, of course, was largely and vociferously opposed to this narrowly defined modernist tradition, as is shown by his essays in *The Cave and the Spring*, his often stated preference for strict poetic forms, his emphasis on the classical and neo-classical legacy, and his sympathy for the aims of the Ern Malley hoax. Yet considered against the broader definition, Hope quite clearly falls within the modernist camp. Gustav Cross's 1964 essay on Hope in the Penguin *Literature of Australia* illustrates this well. Noting that his opposition to the Jindyworobaks and to 1940s surrealism found its expression in satire and irreverence, Cross nevertheless insists that Hope's real importance is as a lyric poet. Within this mode he identifies four major themes in Hope's early work – human isolation, the regenerative power of art, the ambiguous nature of communion through the act of love, and implied criticism of modern society.³ These are all quintessentially modernist concerns.

The force of Hope's opposition to free verse placed him at odds with many of the practitioners even of tempered modernism within the English-speaking literary world, and it may be, as Kevin Hart suggests, that this is one factor that led him to value the particular combination of modernity in content and tradition in respect of form which he found in the poetry of the Russian Acmeists.⁴

Hope began to learn Russian on his return to Australia from Oxford in 1931 but it was not until the mid-1960s that Russian literature came to occupy a significant place in his thinking and writing. Particularly after his retirement from the Australian National University in 1967, Hope devoted a considerable amount of energy to Russian themes, giving lectures to students of the Russian department at Melbourne University, for example, publishing articles on Russian authors including Akhmatova, Mandelstam, Voznesenskii and Dostoevskii, and serving on the editorial board of the newly founded *Melbourne Slavonic Studies*. Two major projects grew out of this interest. The first involved the translation of Russian verse: Hope was associated with the project of David Campbell and Rosemary Dobson (neither of whom knew Russian) to create poems in English from literal versions of Russian poets. By juxtaposing their different versions of the same poem and the literal versions from which they worked, the two Australian poets aimed to give readers a composite understanding of the original in relation to their own specific cultural context. Hope wrote a foreword to their volume *Moscow Trefoil*, in which he expounded his view that poetic translation involved a recreation of the mood of the original in the target language without necessarily following its exact literal meaning, that indeed the concepts of translation and imitation were very closely intertwined.⁵ Hope applied these principles to his own translations of this period, notable to the translations and imitations which he published in *Antechinus* as "Homage to Anna Akhmatova". Hope's second project was to prepare a volume of essays for publication, which would bring together his various ideas on Russian literature as a systematic whole. Yet although numerous plans and outlines for this volume exist in Hope's papers and indeed a substantial amount of the intended content was written and even published in article form, Hope was unable to bring the project to a final conclusion.

Akhmatova and Mandelstam feature very prominently in Hope's critical writing and in his translations. They are also frequently referred to in his notebooks, especially during the 1970s. Hope evidently found in Akhmatova in particular an image of the ideal poet, and the following passage from his lecture notes is worth quoting at length:

my love and admiration for her [Akhmatova's] poetry is partly due to the fact that I feel closer to the spirit and method of her poetry than to any other poet of the period. Pasternak is a giant but his approach to poetry is one I do not share though I can admire it. Marina Tsvetaeva has qualities of energy and passion and can achieve effects that are quite beyond Akhmatova's reach. Osip Mandelshtam can often match her in classical

beauty and lines that seem inevitable and unforgettable. But in the poetry of direct and economical expression of vision and feeling she does the sort of things as a poet I most want to achieve myself.⁶

What then are the particular features of the Acmeist tradition that Hope so admired and how are they reflected in his own poetic practice? This article will consider both Hope's critical writing on the two Acmeist poets and his poetic tribute to them, with the aim of elucidating the more general role of Acmeist thinking in Hope's creativity.

Hope wrote two substantial articles on Mandelstam in the mid-1970s. The first of these was published as "The Blind Swallow" in *Melbourne Slavonic Studies* in 1975.⁷ In it Hope draws out what he sees as the main compositional principles of Mandelstam's poetry, comprehension of which is essential to the full understanding of Mandelstam as a poet. These are, firstly, Mandelstam's reliance on semantic associations established in his other poems and prose writings and referred to only obliquely in the poems under discussion. Hope links this device with Mandelstam's contention in his 1913 essay "O sobesednike" (On the Interlocutor) that a poem should not be addressed to a specific reader in the present, but is like a message in a bottle thrown out into the sea, to be interpreted by the unknown reader who later comes across it.⁸ Mandelstam's argument is essentially that the poet should aim at a universalism that transcends his or her time and place and to avoid the tormented particularism he sees in some Symbolist writers (notably Konstantin Balmont). Hope's conclusion "that Mandelstam felt no obligation in a poem to meet his readers on any common ground of reference, allusion or experience",⁹ seems unjustified. While individual poems may seem obscure, Mandelstam's work as a whole is far less so because of the self-referential semantic networks it creates. As I. Smirnov noted of Acmeism in general, it constitutes an autonomous poetic world in which the signifier is regularly substituted for the signified.¹⁰

Secondly, Hope notes Mandelstam's theory (most clearly expressed in "O prirode slova" (On the Nature of the Word) that Russian is the natural heir of ancient Greek culture of which it comprises an organic continuation and extension,¹¹ and that therefore in writing about classical Greece, Mandelstam is at the same time writing about Russia in the 1920s. The third element that Hope identifies in Mandelstam's poetry is what he calls the "the sort of dream-work in which the sleeping mind, like Coleridge in 'Kublai Khan', brings together images and ideas and echoes of ideas from diverse areas of memory and experience and constructs new and unexpected poetic effects from these elements".¹²

Drawing considerably on the ground-breaking methodology of Kiril Taranovsky and Clarence Brown, whose key works on Mandelstam had appeared in the late 1960s and early 1970s,¹³ Hope proceeds to illustrate the complex interweaving of different layers of memory and experience through detailed readings of two interrelated poems from 1920. With the first of these. "Kogda Psikhieia-zhizn' spuskaetsia k teniam" (When Psyche-Life descends to the shades),¹⁴ Hope isolates the various elements taken from Apuleius, Virgil, Homer, Russian folklore and the contemporary world, which in combination speak of the possible renewal of Russian poetry in the spirit of Hellenism, "by death and resurrection" if the poet is prepared to take the risk. The second poem, "Ia slovo pozabyl, chto ia khotel skazat'" (I have forgotten the word that I wanted to say),¹⁵ linked to the first through the hopeful image of the swallow, Hope reads against the story of Orpheus and Eurydice, suggesting also the renewal-return of the poetic word, but also full of foreboding that this renewal may be thwarted.

In a footnote to the publication of this essay in *Melbourne Slavonic Studies*, Hope noted that an extended version would be included in his volume of essays *The Pack of Autolykus*, shortly to be released. Hope's papers suggest that this volume was at one

point intended to include several essays on Russian themes,¹⁶ though it was eventually published without them in 1978. The longer version does exist in typescript, however, under the title “The Swallow and the Bee”, and includes Hope’s commentary on a third poem of 1920, “Voz’mi na radost’ iz moikh ladonei” (Take for joy from my palms).¹⁷ Again he discusses the intertwining of motifs – a love poem to Ol’ga Arbenina, references to Persephone – to create a discourse about the recycling and renewing of poetry, where this time the central image is the bee rather than the swallow.¹⁸

Hope wrote a second long essay on Mandelstam, which has not apparently been published, but was delivered as a lecture in 1976.¹⁹ This takes a similar line of argument to “The Blind Swallow” but focuses on Mandelstam’s 1918 poem “Tristia”.²⁰ As before, Hope aims to provide a key to the poem by explicating its semantic frame of reference and the connections between its classical allusions, its possible reference to Mandelstam’s biography, and its social and political context. The theme of the rebirth of culture is addressed through images of exile and divination linked by a fear of the future. Hope notes the poet’s identification with Ovid, Aeneas and Tibullus, and again highlights Mandelstam’s “deliberate technique of writing a poem about the present in terms both of the past and the present, so that the recognition of recurrence gives richer understanding and deeper significance to the poem as a whole”.

Hope’s poetic tribute to Mandelstam in two poems of 1974 consciously employs similar compositional devices to those Hope identified in Mandelstam’s own poetry. The first of these, “In Memoriam: Osip Mandelstam, December 1938”, as Hope himself noted in *The New Cratylus*, attempts to recreate Mandelstam’s state of mind as he faced death on the Kolyma.²¹ It contains overlapping material from classical myth, from the historical present and from the prophesied future. St Petersburg is equated with Troy, Elabuga with Troezen, and the Kolyma with Hades. Numerous references to Mandelstam’s own poetry and to Mandelstam’s use of classical material serve to reinforce the theme from *Tristia* of the persistence of poetry and its ability to survive the destruction of the poet and the society in which he lives. This theme was rendered explicit by the original first stanza of the poem, which was omitted from the published version at the suggestion of David Campbell:

I am the one last poem to escape
From his heart’s burning city. When he knew
There was nothing now to hope for “Go!” he said,
“Bear witness to my ruin!” Blue lips agape
In the last O of agony sped me through
To bring the living his message from the dead.²²

Omission of this stanza creates a much tauter lyric structure in the poem, by removing the personification of the poem itself, unifying the point of view, and thus reducing its impulse to narrative, produces an outcome which is much closer to its model in Mandelstam.

The second poem, “The Wild Bees”, which immediately follows “In Memoriam” in *A Late Picking*,²³ makes no direct reference to Mandelstam at all, although it does elucidate an allusion to Pindar made in the other poem, and by placing the two poems together Hope is paying tribute to the characteristic Mandelstamian device of paired poems. “The Wild Bees” retells a passage from Pausanias’ *Guide to Greece* about the poet Pindar. According to legend Pindar’s gift of poetry came from bees which made their wax on his lips as he slept by the side of the road when travelling as a young man. Extending Pausanias’ account, Hope translates this episode into a characteristically sexualised

meeting with Persephone, who foretells his career as a poet and awards him the gift of poetry:

She bent and kissed him lightly on the mouth,
Crying: "Golden reins! Remember what I say!"
Darkness. A roar. The earth shook. He awoke
To find his lips sealed with the waxen cells
Which wild bees swarming in the asphodels
Had moulded while he slept; and when he broke
That seal, he sang, and singing, went his way.

Pausanias goes on to give an account of a second visit from Persephone just before Pindar's death, in which she complains that she is the only god to whom he has not dedicated a song, but that he would do so nevertheless "before he came to her". Ten days later Pindar died and then appeared in a dream to a relative to whom he recited his poetic celebration of Persephone. As Hope mentions in his notes the first three words of Pindar's poem have been preserved, and he uses them as an epigraph to his own poem: "Potnia, thesmophore, chrisianon", translating them as "Lady, bearer of rites, golden-reined..." In "The Wild Bees", Hope imagines the content of Pindar's hymn to Persephone, referring back to his original meeting with her:

He sang that Delphic priestess called the Bee
Who had made him partner in Apollo's share;
He sang dead heroes in their beehive tombs;
He sang the tasting of the honeycombs
Which the wild bees in their dark caves prepare,
The food of those the Muses hold in fee.

The theme of death and the rebirth of poetry, and the motifs of the Persephone myth and the wild bees clearly resonate with Hope's tribute to Mandelstam and with Mandelstam's own poetry. But in "The Wild Bees" Hope goes further than this and locates himself as a poet also firmly within the Pindar-Mandelstam tradition. The final stanzas of the poem, combining myth and allusion with reference to Hope's own feelings and experiences when visiting Greece, makes a particular link between dream states and poetic creativity and locates the survival of Hope's own poetry firmly within the context of the classical tradition:

I too must die – nor would I be reborn,
But after my death to quicken other lives,
Trusting, if in my turn I bring my song,
Deep under ground my shade may taste that strong
Black honey from which alone our art revives,
And share its resurrection with the corn.

If for Mandelstam Russian culture was an organic extension of classical Greece, then for Hope the world created in his own verse is a part of the same cultural continuum.

Hope's published writing on Akhmatova comprises two articles (or rather two versions of the same article) centred on her late cycle "Tainy remesla" (Secrets of the Craft).²⁴ The first of these, prepared for a seminar on translation from Russian held at

the Australian National University in 1977 and subsequently published in *Quadrant*,²⁵ takes as its framework the premise that in order to translate poetry effectively the translator should pay proper attention not only to the final form of the source text, but also to “the processes that went on in its composition”, and that “the language he uses is not merely passive material. It is a loving and autonomous thing and he will not succeed in producing anything like a poem, unless he lets it have its own way.” The second article, an expanded version of the first, published in the 1979 Festschrift volume for Nina Christesen, drops the focus on translation to concentrate more directly on questions relating to “the inspiration and composition of poetry”.²⁶

Hope begins with a brief account of the origins of the Acmeist movement, in which he notes the incoherence of the Acmeists’ early manifestoes and makes a distinction between Gumilev’s supposedly mechanistic conception of poetry on the one hand and the more nuanced approach shared by Akhmatova and Mandelstam on the other. For Hope, Gumilev, in repudiating Symbolist mysticism, repeats the mistake of Théophile Gautier in treating poetry as a craft in the same sense that jewellery making or sculpture are crafts, and taking words to be inert materials in the same way as marble or precious metals or stones. In Hope’s view words are inherently different from other materials because they are not “inert passive matter external to the artist”, but “something living, internal to the poet’s own mind and heart and, in a mysterious way, coming to him from some source beyond his conscious control or knowledge”. Notwithstanding the efforts of the various Poets’ Guilds organised by Gumilev, poetry therefore cannot ultimately be taught, as poems “make themselves”.²⁷ Hope here perhaps misrepresents the nature of creativity in the plastic arts and certainly seems to ignore both the evidence of the early “architectural” poems of Mandelstam’s book *Kamen’* (Stone), and the new directions of Gumilev’s poetry in *Ognennyi stolp* (Pillar of Fire), his last collection before his untimely death in 1921. However, as a characterisation of the mature work of Akhmatova and Mandelstam Hope’s position is valid enough.

Hope treats “Secrets of the Craft” primarily as a catalogue of the ways in which poems arise, focussing on four of the cycle’s component parts in particular as exemplifying different sets of possibilities. Thus the first poem of the cycle “Tvorchestvo” (Creativity) shows a poem emerging from the background noise and appearing fully formed as if under dictation, “as though aspects of the world were choosing the poet as an instrument and expressing themselves through him”.²⁸ The second poem, “Mne ni k chemy odicheskie rati” (“I have no use for odes in full parade” – Hope’s translation), suggests that poems arise from the most unpromising material, and yet their spontaneity is nevertheless moulded by the skill of the poet. “Poslednee stiktovorenie” (“Last Poem”), the sixth poem, stresses “the autonomy of the emerging poem” by describing the different anthropomorphised characters belonging to different incipient works, while “Mnogoe eshche, naverno, khochet” (“There is much, probably, which still desires” – Hope’s translation), the final poem of the cycle, “is concerned more especially with the poet’s sense of being chosen, or supplicated, to be the voice of objects, persons or events of the world around”.²⁹

Together these poems, according to Hope, present a composite picture of the “poet-craftsman” and her complex relationship with the material of her poetry. But Hope also draws attention to two other figures whom he sees as essential to “this conception of poetry as a kind of co-operative team-work”.³⁰ These are first the Reader as described in “Chitatel” (“The Reader”), the fifth poem, who, like Mandelstam’s putative reader in “On the Interlocutor”, is separated from the contemporary world, a “mystery”, “buried in the earth”.³¹ Secondly, Hope notes the importance for Akhmatova of the figure of the Muse, who appears from her earliest poetry, variously as sister, companion, friend and preceptress, either bestowing the gift of poetry or withholding it according to no obvious pattern. The third poem of “Secrets of the Craft”, “Muza” (“The Muse”), Hope

comments, expresses the poet's unenviable compulsion to "wait on the unpredictable and unbiddable presence of a third party".³²

In his articles on "Secrets of the Craft", Hope touches only on some aspects of Akhmatova's complex cycle, ignoring to a large extent its intertextuality and its rootedness in the social and political realities of Stalinist Russia. The contrast between the public poet and the secret reader in "The Reader", particularly when the poem is read in conjunction with Pasternak's "Gamlet" ("Hamlet"), for example, suggests that Akhmatova's poem is to be read as a description of the fate of the Soviet poet, obliged to put on a public face of conformity at odds with the message intended for the secret, informed reader. "Creativity", written in 1936, if read with Akhmatova's *Rekviem* ("Requiem") in mind, clearly suggests, through its reference to a background of whispers and groans, the role of poetry in making a public record of the Stalinist Terror.³³

But Hope's interest in Akhmatova's cycle, as he himself acknowledges, stemmed primarily from the ways in which it intersected with his own ideas about the nature of poetic creativity. On several occasions in his notebooks of the late 1970s and early 1980s Hope discusses the creation of his own works in terms very close to those he uses in discussing Akhmatova. He describes, for example, how the 1948 poem "Chorale" originated with "a sort of thwarted pregnancy with the sense of voices muttering below the surface" for several weeks before it finally took sufficiently clear form to be written down. This was followed by "William Butler Yeats" which Hope claims came spontaneously and "unbidden" in its final form apart from the last two stanzas.³⁴ Other notebook entries refer to the role of what Hope calls the "dream-team" in his own poetic creativity, the operation of the unconscious in the creative process, which following his reading on Akhmatova and Mandelstam, Hope associates particularly with Acmeism.³⁵ Apparently the first poem which came to Hope through a dream was an ode in Russian (of somewhat dubious quality) on the death of Pushkin of which, on waking, he remembered most of two lines: "Budet Pushkin, budet slava ego / Do sroka ...ykh vekov" (Pushkin will endure, his fame will endure / to the end of ... ages).³⁶

The topic is taken up in the essay "Poems in the Making" included in *The New Cratylus*, where Hope's reading of Akhmatova's "Secrets of the Craft" forms the centre of a much broader examination of poetic inspiration taking in, among others, Plato, Nietzsche, Wordsworth, Yeats and Rimbaud.³⁷ It is symptomatic of Hope's very deep engagement with Akhmatova and Mandelstam in particular in the late 1970s that he should place a Russian poet at the centre of an argument relating to the whole of the European critical tradition. Hope's identification of a set of "characters involved in the making of a poem"³⁸ is also reflected in his poem "On the Night Shift", in which he describes the workers of the poet's unconscious, who act out dream sequences while he is asleep, and whose mysterious nocturnal labour gives him material on which to work rationally during the day.³⁹ In this poem Hope goes on to explore what might happen if the day-time poet attempted to make a visit to the night-shift workers – he is met with incomprehension, confirming the view that the totality of the process by which poems come into being is not something that can ultimately be understood by the rational mind.

Hope's major poetic tribute to Akhmatova is the cycle "Homage to Anna Akhmatova" included in his 1981 collection *Antechinus*.⁴⁰ This combines translations from Akhmatova's verse and Hope's own original poetry in what comprises one of Hope's most sustained statements about the nature of poetry and the role of the poet, embodying Hope's appropriation of the poetics of Acmeism and drawing on images and techniques from Mandelstam and Gumilev as well as from Akhmatova herself.

The cycle begins with the original poem "Letter to Amanda" addressed to Amanda Haight, the author of the first biography of Akhmatova and responsible for introducing many Western readers, including Hope, to Akhmatova's life and work in the mid-1970s.⁴¹ Hope refers to Haight frequently in his notebooks of the period and indeed corresponded with her at some length, sending her his translations for comment and seeking advice on particular points of interpretation. Hope's poem focuses on one specific episode in Akhmatova's biography – her meeting in 1965 during her visit to Britain to receive an honorary doctorate from Oxford University with Salomeia Nikolaevna Andronikva-Gal'pern, who had been a member of Akhmatova's intimate circle in St Petersburg before the revolution and whom she had not seen for over forty years. The following passage is almost Haight's entire account:

In London Akhmatova also saw her old friend Solomea Halpern, now living in a little house in Chelsea. Never able to cook herself, the poet was amazed at her friend's prowess. "Salomea, when did you learn to cook?" she asked in amazement. Her friend answered that she had devoted her energies to cooking when she felt she had been a Muse for long enough.⁴²

Hope uses this episode to create a mythologised version of the lives of the two women following essentially the same principles that he identified in his essays on Mandelstam, and which he sees as fundamentally Acmeist in nature. This involves the inclusion and combination of motifs from multiple semantic fields – the introduction, for example, of material from different periods of the women's lives: the contrast between a dazzling pre-revolutionary youth, a middle-age of exile and persecution, and an old age of modest prosperity, combined with a renewal of prestige. The poem is replete with allusions to the portrayal of Andronikova and Akhmatova in the verse of Mandelstam, Gumilev and Akhmatova herself, and also to the classical tradition – Akhmatova is referred to as a sibyl in the context of her ability to record and interpret the fate of the Russian people through the period of Stalinism. Hope's dramatisation of the meeting also projects the mysteries of domesticity and survival on to the same emotive plane as the force for creative inspiration for which both Andronikova and Akhmatova were famous in their youth. He sees the meeting of the two women in terms of the classical mythology of rebirth, referring to them as Demeter and Persephone:

They meet

This time in earth's great parable, recast

As Anna Andreyevna and Salomea,

The fruitful soil and the new burgeoning wheat.

Their speech is an echo of the "warm, ageless chuckle from the mothering Earth".

Hope suggests that the message he infers from Akhmatova and Andronikova's meeting is a particularly female one, that their old age produces "an afterglow not granted the fates of men". Yet he incorporates into the text of his poem his own translation of Akhmatova's 1940 poem to Salomeia Nikolaevna, "Ten" ("Shade"), in which she records the unexpected and inopportune memory of "the star of nineteen thirteen" amid the turmoil of Europe at war.⁴³ Hope uses this poem, of course, to encapsulate the combination of suffering and freedom from care which has characterised the two women's lives. At the same time he also aims to imply that his own poetry is in a sense a continuation of Akhmatova's, that Hope himself is a continuator of both the classical and the Acmeist tradition, and that the voice of the "mothering Earth" is at least partly reflected in his own.

The translations of short poems which Hope includes in his cycle embody many of the themes he chose to highlight in Akhmatova's works, and also illustrate some more

broadly Acmeist techniques. There are three poems from “Secrets of the Craft” and one of Akhmatova’s poems to the Muse, reflecting Hope’s interests in the genesis of poetry. There is Hope’s version of Akhmatova’s 1936 poem “Voronezh”, dedicated to Mandelstam in exile and contrasting the poet’s “disgrace” with the poetry of the natural environment and containing a promise of the eventual overthrow of tyranny in its echoes of the Russian victory over the Tatars at Kulikovo. The poem combines precise observation (of the crows flying above the statue of Peter the Great in the centre of the town, for example) with historical allusion and with personal reference to Mandelstam’s circumstances. There is also Akhmatova’s 1924 poem “Lotova zhena” (“Lot’s Wife”), in which she characteristically dramatises the point of view of a female character conventionally ignored in the source texts and draws out otherwise unsuspected layers of emotion. This is a device for which, on the evidence of Hope’s own poems on Biblical or mythological themes, he would have had a considerable affinity – indeed Akhmatova’s cycle “Bibleiskie stikhi” (“Biblical Verses”), of which “Lot’s Wife” is one, was among the texts which Hope focussed on in his lectures on Akhmatova in the late 1970s. Both of these poems exemplify the ethical dimension in Acmeist poetics – one comprising a homage to a persecuted colleague, the other refusing to condemn Lot’s wife’s disobedience in turning back for a final glance at her native Sodom. The other two short poems in Hope’s “Homage to Anna Akhmatova” reinforce this dimension of her work in the context of the Second World War. “Leningrad in March 1941”, on the face of it a classically Acmeist portrait of the city implying a transcendent dimension in its combination of spires and water after the manner of Mandelstam’s “Admiralteistvo” (“Admiralty”), also conveys a sense of threat because of the contrast between the description of the city and the reader’s knowledge that the Soviet Union was to be invaded by the Nazis shortly after the date given in the poem’s title. “In Memory of my Neighbour the Little Leningrad Boy, Valya Smirnov” evokes the suffering of the Leningrad siege through a highly personalised account of loss.

Hope’s cycle ends with two original works which again incorporate material from Akhmatova’s poetry and recapitulate Hope’s understanding of Acmeism. “A Northern Elegy” centres round the sixth of Akhmatova’s *Severnye elegii* (“Northern Elegies”) (or fourth in the numeration known to Hope), “Est’ tri epokhi u vospominanii” (“There are three periods in recollection” – Hope’s translation), which Hope translates in its entirety as the second of the five sections of his own poem.⁴⁴ In this elegy Akhmatova identifies three stages in memory, as the past gradually recedes from connection with the present. In the first, memories are still vivid and significant; in the second they gradually become foreign as surviving links between the past and the present fall away; and in the third they have ceased to have any connection with the present to the extent that they seem not to be part of the life of the speaker at all, but something quite irrelevant to it. Hope notes the bitterness of this conclusion, and explains it by evoking the immediate postwar context in which it was written. The first section of Hope’s Northern Elegy thus evokes an image of Leningrad at the point of Akhmatova’s return from Tashkent in mid-1944, using images from many of her earlier poems, and particularly from those that Hope included in his own cycle. Alongside the destruction caused by war, Hope notes the beginnings of postwar reconstruction. This he links not only with the writing of Akhmatova’s elegy, but also with her return to her old flat in Fontannyi dom (Fountain House), the old Sheremet’ev Palace with its motto “Deus conservat omnia” over the gates. Akhmatova’s work of poetic recreation is thus given a cosmic significance, and Hope compares Akhmatova herself again to the Sibyl at Cumae, to Eurydice, to Lot’s wife and to Lazarus, all examples in their different ways of the mythical overcoming of death and destruction.

In section three of his poem Hope extends Akhmatova’s typology of memory to identify a fourth epoch, in which, after its dissolution, recollection is reborn transformed into poetry. Hope again refers to the cycle of the vegetative myth:

Memory is the seed and that is why,
Unless it fall into the ground and die,
It cannot create the new life of the corn.

Hope gives Akhmatova's long historically focussed poem *Poema bez geroia* ("Poem without a Hero"), the first part of which supposedly arose spontaneously and fully formed in the poet's mind, as an example of the manifestation of this fourth epoch of memory – the world of the past transfigured and recreated in a form that "speaks at last for all humanity". In section four Hope describes "the fifth and final stage of memory", which comes after the poet's death – the poet no longer remembers anything at all being removed from the world as an active force, but lives on in the collective cultural consciousness: "now / All things remember her".

This line of argument leads Hope to conclude by reproducing in part five a poem written by Akhmatova on the death of Boris Pasternak in 1960, "Umolok vchera nepovtorimyi golos" ("The unique voice fell silent, yesterday" – Hope's translation), in which she refers to the deceased poet as "zhizn' daiushchii kolos" (the life-giving grain), and similarly implies that the essence of his poetic genius has been transformed into a part of natural world. By linking together Akhmatova, Pasternak and by implication his own poetry, Hope gives a concrete form of expression to his theoretical argument about the survival and continuing influence of poetry.

The final poem in Hope's "Homage to Anna Akhmatova", "For a Grave at Komarovo", refers to Akhmatova's burial place outside Leningrad and imagines her arrival in a classically conceived underworld, where the poet meets again the figure of the Muse whose fleeting visits she had recorded in her poetry. Akhmatova is greeted with the same question she had asked the Muse in 1924: "Was it you, then, with Dante trod the maze / Of the interminable gyres of Hell / Which, each alive, it was your fate to know?" She gives essentially the same reply: "Sister, I went alone – but it was I". Combining classical allusion with reference to Akhmatova's texts and to the realia of her grave site, Hope returns here to an emphasis on the ethical role of the poet as chronicler of her generation.⁴⁵

This is perhaps a surprising conclusion for poet who usually seems uninterested in politics. Yet it seems to be the case that Hope's self-alignment with the poetics of Acmeism, and particularly his interest in the verse of Akhmatova and Mandelstam, gave a coherence and an edge to his practice of poetry which is not always apparent elsewhere. He had come close to Acmeist practice in his own earlier dramatisations of episodes from the mythological, biblical and historical record, and in the combination of intimate detail and cultural allusion which informs poems such as "Imperial Adam" and "Lot's Daughters". For all the impulse towards an "Orphic vision of cosmic order" which McAuley first identified in Hope's writing,⁴⁶ however, reading through Hope's books of verse it is hard to find any systematic metapoetic statement. It is in Hope's tributes to Mandelstam and Akhmatova that he comes closest to such a statement – one in which he confirms the validity of the poetic project, the unity of the poetic word and the importance and inevitability of cultural continuity which transcends the vicissitudes of the historical world.

NOTES

- 1 Kirsten Blythe Painter, *Flint on a Bright Stone: a Revolution of Precision and Constraint in American, Russian and German Modernism*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006.
- 2 See Geoffrey Hartman, *Beyond Formalism: Literary Essays 1958–1970*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970, p. 270. See also John Hollander, “Introduction” to his *Poems of Our Moment*, New York: Pegasus, 1968, p. 18; Kevin Hart, *A. D. Hope*, Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 54.
- 3 Gustav Cross, “The Poetry of A. D. Hope”, in Geoffrey Dutton (ed.), *The Literature of Australia*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964, pp. 377–88.
- 4 Hart, *A. D. Hope*, p. 58.
- 5 A. D. Hope, ‘Foreword’ in David Campbell and Rosemary Dobson, *Moscow Trefoil: Poems from the Russian of Anna Akhmatova and Osip Mandelstam*, Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1975, pp. vii–xii.
- 6 “Notes etc. for Akhmatova Lectures 1976”, NLA MS 5836/29/260.
- 7 A. D. Hope, “The Blind Swallow: Some Parleyings with Mandelstam”, *Melbourne Slavonic Studies*, nos. 9–10, 1975, pp. 12–29.
- 8 Osip Mandel’shtam, *Sobranie sochinenii v trekh tomakh*, vol. 2, New York: Inter-Language Literary Associates, 1971 (hereafter Mandelstam II), pp. 234–5.
- 9 Hope, “Blind Swallow”, p. 14.
- 10 I. Smirnov, *Khudozhestvennaia smysl’i evoliutsiia poeticheskikh system*, Moscow: Nauka, 1977, p. 50. See Justin Doherty, *The Acmeist Movement in Russian Poetry: Culture and the Word*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995, p. 100.
- 11 Mandelstam II, pp. 241–59. Hope mistakenly claims that this idea is developed in ‘On the Interlocutor’.
- 12 Hope, “Blind Swallow”, p. 15.
- 13 Clarence Brown, *Mandelstam*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973; Kiril Taranovskii, “Pchely i osy v poezii Mandel’shtama: k voprosu o vliianii Viacheslava Ivanova na Mandel’shtama” in *To Honor Roman Jakobson: Essays on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday, 11 October 1966*, The Hague: Mouton, 1967, pp. 1973–95. Hope did not, however, hold a very high opinion of Taranovsky as a textual critic, as his manuscript notes on this article suggest: MS 5836/29/262.
- 14 Osip Mandel’shtam, *Sobranie sochinenii v trekh tomakh*, vol. 1, 2nd edn, New York: Inter-Language Literary Associates, 1967 (hereafter Mandelstam I), pp. 80–1.
- 15 Mandelstam I, pp. 81–2.
- 16 “Voznesensky’s Lament for Two Unborn Poems”, NLA MS 5836/29/257; “Andrey Voznesensky: Article for M. Slavonic Studies & Revised Text for The Pack of Autolyclus”, NLA MS 5836/29/258.
- 17 Mandelstam I, p. 84.
- 18 “The Swallow and the Bee”, NLA MS 5836/29/256.
- 19 “Mandelstam’s ‘Tristia’”, NLA MS 5836/29/261.
- 20 Mandelstam, I, pp. 73–4.
- 21 A. D. Hope, *A Late Picking*, Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1975, pp. 78–80; id., *The New Cratylus: Notes on the Craft of Poetry*, Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1979, pp. 115–17.
- 22 Notebook XVI, l. 23 v., NLA MS 5836/10/105.
- 23 Hope, *A Late Picking*, pp. 81–3.
- 24 Anna Akhmatova, *Sochineniia*, vol. 1, New York: Inter-Language Literary Associates, 1967 (hereafter Akhmatova I), pp. 251–5.
- 25 A. D. Hope, “Anna Akhmatova: The Secrets of the Craft”, *Quadrant*, Sept. 1977, pp. 6–8.

- ²⁶ A. D. Hope, "Anna Akhmatova's *Secrets of the Craft*", in Judith Armstrong and Rae Slonek (eds), *Essays to Honour Nina Christesen: Founder of Russian Studies in Australia*, Melbourne: Australian International Press & Publications, 1979, pp. 64–79.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 66. See also the entry "Gautier in Art" in Notebook XIX, l. 86 (NLA MS 5836/10/106), in which Gumilev and Gautier are castigated as second-class and intellectuals and the latter is made the butt of the following comic stanza: "Théophile Gautier / Under his canotier / Did not maintain / Any great brain".
- ²⁸ Hope, "Anna Akhmatova's *Secrets of the Craft*", pp. 67–8.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 73.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 75.
- ³¹ However, for a discussion of how Akhmatova's reader differs from Mandelstam's, and in particular the active participation of Akhmatova's reader in her poetry, see Susan Amert, *In a Shattered Mirror: the Later Poetry of Anna Akhmatova*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, pp. 26–9.
- ³² Hope, "Anna Akhmatova's *Secrets of the Craft*", p. 78.
- ³³ See David Wells, *Anna Akhmatova: Her Poetry*, Oxford: Berg, 1996, pp. 64–6.
- ³⁴ Notebook XV, ll. 42–3, NLA MS 5836/10/104. See also Hope, *New Cratylus*, p. 99.
- ³⁵ Notebook XV, ll. 59–63.
- ³⁶ Notebook XV, ll. 35–6. On Hope's relationship to the 'dream-team' see Ann McCulloch, *Dance of the Nomad: a Study of the Selected Notebooks of A. D. Hope*, Canberra: Pandanus Books, 2005, pp. 303–31.
- ³⁷ Hope, *New Cratylus*, pp. 92–110.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 102.
- ³⁹ A. D. Hope, *Orpheus*, Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1991, pp. 17–21.
- ⁴⁰ A. D. Hope, *Antechinus: Poems 1975–1980*, Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1981, pp. 87–104.
- ⁴¹ Amanda Haight, *Anna Akhmatova: a Poetic Pilgrimage*, London: Oxford University Press, 1976.
- ⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 190.
- ⁴³ Akhmatova I, p. 259.
- ⁴⁴ Akhmatova I, pp. 312–13.
- ⁴⁵ On this topic see also A. D. Hope, "Safe Conduct: the Poet and the Soviet State", *Helix*, nos. 7–8, 1981, pp. 156–64, in which he comments on the degree to which Pasternak, Tsvetaeva, Mandelstam and Akhmatova were permitted to criticise the Soviet state and speculates that Stalin himself must have acted as their protector.
- ⁴⁶ James McAuley, *A Map of Australian Verse: the Twentieth Century*, Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1975, p. 180. See also Hart, *A. D. Hope*, pp. 21–7, 86.