



## Research Article

# CATEGORIES OF CHRONOTOPE IN THE POETRY OF A. A. AKHMATOVA

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## ABSTRACT

The article describes the categories of time and space in the poetry of A. Akhmatova through analysing one of her lyrical verses and demonstrates the role of these categories in presentation of the dynamics of the lyrical hero's internal state.

## KEYWORDS

Poetry, space, time, hronotop, poetic text.

## INTRODUCTION

The categories of space and time play an important role in Akhmatova's poetry. They not only form the artistic unity of the work, but also directly relate its content to reality. To a large extent, thanks to them, it is possible to speak of Akhmatova's poetry as a well-organised text. Space and time as the basic forms of being and life appear in Akhmatova's poetic text as a unified whole, representing a chronotope (literally

"time-space") in the latter sense as formulated by M.M.Bakhtin: "The signs of time are revealed in space, and space is comprehended by time". It should be noted that most of the poet's lyrical works do not simply reveal the signs of time in space, but concentrate several temporal plans in a single spatial unit. When embarking on an analysis of Akhmatova's poetry, it is crucial to bear in mind that changes in the



spatial and temporal structure of the text are one of the main signals the author uses to convey the tense state of her lyrical protagonist.

### THE MAIN FINDINGS AND RESULTS

The function of time embodied in space is fulfilled by Akhmatova's artistic category of memory. In Akhmatova, remembering something is associated with spatial detailing. This statement is illustrated in a poem that has hardly been analysed in Akhmatovian scholarship:

Вижу выцветший флаг над таможей

И над городом желтую муть.

Вот уж сердце мое осторожней

Замирает, и больно вздохнуть.

Стать бы снова приморской девчонкой,

Туфли на босу ногу надеть,

И закладывать косы коронкой,

И взволнованным голосом петь.

All would look at the swarthy heads of the temple of Chersonesos from the porch and not know that from happiness and glory hearts grow hopelessly decrepit. The poem was written in 1913. By this time Akhmatova had already matured as a person. In this lyrical narrative, the poet mentally returns to her childhood (to the dacha Otrada 'Chersonesos'), three versts away from Sevastopol, where the Gorenko family spent every summer from 1896 to 1903.

The work opens with a brief spatial sketch: I see a faded flag over the customs / And a yellow murk over the city.

The next two lines of the first quatrain tell of a sensual perception of the city: she "sighs in pain", her "heart sinks gingerly" at the memory of a happy period in her life.

The beginning of the poem is represented by the present tense, which is characteristic of the poetic text in general and of Akhmatova's texts in particular. In pointing out that every poem "is a speech act", Yu. I. Levin writes: "The poet, by giving this or that 'surface' speech act a poetic form, seeks to capture forever a given moment, its subject, emotional and/or speech content".

Thus, the first quatrain captures a "given moment" which, as Levin states in the same article, can be "appropriated by everyone" in a process of "sympathetic understanding" and "congenial reproduction" through "self-identification with the author" (or "lyric hero").

Turning to the central part of the text, we see how the category of memory becomes an essential facet of Akhmatova's intimate poetry, associated with the lyrical theme of childhood and adolescence: To be a seaside girl again...

It is important to note that the continuation of the text unfolds in the infinitive form: to become; and to pledge; and to sing; all to look; and not to know. According to A. K. Zholkovsky, "the general semantic charge of infinitive poetry is a meditation on the otherness of the subject, transport or metamorphosis into the other (better, worse, ideal, characteristic, typical)". "Infinitive writing is very suitable for thinking about alternative versions of life". Among the characteristic features of infinitive poems, A. K. Zholkovsky highlights "virtual metamorphoses and spatial movements into 'the other', sometimes with a route there and back, sometimes with a listing of several parallel or subsequent passages". In the poem, the author draws his virtual movements through time-space by listing the actions that follow.

Such lines suggest that the heroine's unfulfilled desire to become a carefree young girl again must be due to something. The last two stanzas of the poem, as is always the case with Akhmatova, are a confirmation of the reader's guess: And not to know that happiness and fame / Hopelessly wither the heart.



Having outlined the ideological and imaginative structure of the analysed work, let us consider the associative parallels, by means of which the time of childhood is superimposed on the anxious worldview of the present. The anxious state of the heroine is established from the very first lines.

The adjective "faded" (from "to fade" - "to lose the brightness of colour from time, sun, wind") emphasises not only the decrepitude of the customs flag, but also indirectly characterises the life of the heroine, who has lost her sense of freshness of feeling and brightness of impressions.

The expansion of meaning is also evident in the next line: And beyond the city yellow turbidity, where the word "turbidity" in combination with the adjective "yellow" helps the reader to draw in his imagination a picture of a southern city, over which the sultry air, filled with sunlight, literally hangs. However, considering this line in the framework of the whole poem, we find that the lexeme "turbidity" generates a sensual association, manifesting the second of the dictionary meanings: "obscurity, lack of clarity of consciousness, disturbing state of mind". Thus, the opening phrase of the poem (I see a faded flag over the customs office / And a yellow turbidity over the city.) In addition to its direct meaning, it also becomes a kind of expressor of the heroine's anxious state of mind.

In the first sentence, the state of anxiety is only guessed at the associative level, while in the second it is expressed directly: "My heart grows faint, and it hurts to take a breath.

The second quatrain, taking the reader into the heroine's serene childhood, in which everything was clear and simple, brings the past (her childhood) and the future together as a desirable place where simplicity of feeling and the ease of happiness would be possible. The adjectives "faded" and "cloudy" become attributes of another period in the life of the heroine, which no longer has the same emotional thrill, the same vivid impressions. The colours of this adult world have "faded" and "clouded" over time.

The sense of the tragedy and imperfection of human existence is expressed by the poet in the final line: And not to know that happiness and fame / Hopelessly wither the heart. This phrase is a clear confirmation that Akhmatova's poetic problematics, contrary to popular belief, are not limited to the theme of unrequited love. The range of poetic themes expands through the inclusion of deeply philosophical ideas and reflections on life in general. Thus, in the last, undoubtedly, key phrase, Akhmatova conveys to the reader her idea that happiness and fame are tragic and demand a heavy reckoning from man. They wear out the heart hopelessly and devastate the soul.

On an associative level, the last lines are closely intertwined with the opening lines, creating the following associative series: hopelessly decrepit hearts - faded flag - yellow turbidity - faltering heart - sighing painfully. This series is in direct contrast to the description of childhood experiences: seaside girl - bare feet - braids crowned - agitated voice. Thanks to this outwardly expressed contrast between two different periods of life - the carefreeness of childhood and the tension of adulthood - Akhmatova manages to juxtapose two time-plans within a small text, concentrating them in a single space.

## CONCLUSION

The above analysis, as well as the observation of other poems, allows us to state that space is a significant category in Akhmatova's poetic work. Through the creation of locally determined space the poet succeeds not only in conveying the signs of time, but also in creating the dynamics of the inner world of the lyrical hero. The active use of the technique of contraposition in time helps the author to capture the significant aspects of life in the mental refraction of the lyrical characters.

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