

'dedication' and 'epilogue ii' from requiem by anna akhmatova essay sample

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'Dedication' and 'Epilogue II' are poems reflective of the suffering and changes the Russian people have known under Yezhov terror. 'Dedication' focuses on the emotional and psychological impact of the Yezhov terror on human beings, which Akhmatova also feels from a mother's view. 'Epilogue II' is Akhmatova's response towards all the tragedies she has experienced from a poet's perspective. 'Dedication' possesses an abundance of enjambment, which flows throughout the poem. This combined with a rhyming structure where the first, third and six lines rhyme, designates a lyrical quality to the poem. It is as if Akhmatova is transforming her raw emotions; her suffering, isolation and fear into a tune that can be heard by all. Personification of nature opens the poem through the line "the mountains bow before this anguish." The choice of the lexis "bow" highlights the passivity of even the strongest powers, emphasising the complete distortion the country has been subjected to by the government's unparalleled control.

The poem progresses to feelings of futility, illustrated with the contrast between the two lines "someone who Still feels the sunset's glow" and "But we don't know it", conveying the Russian peoples' diminished hope and separation from the ability to feel warmth and happiness. Synaesthesia is engaged in the comparison between the "tramp of boots" and "Keys scraping against our flesh" to depict a tangible pain that comes from the constant apprehension of the people, signifying that, although the people in the lines are not prisoners themselves, they are still tortured by their fear. The action of the people in lines, "Rising as though for early mass" exposes the irony of the circumstances. Mass is supposedly a righteous and sanctified

occasion, while people waiting behind prison lines is an atrocity caused by the considerably satanic callousness of the government. Akhmatova forms a paradox from "Through the capital of beasts we'd thread" as the people of the "capital" (that once represented civilisation) have supposedly become "beasts."

This stresses the complete loss of humanity in the government; the disappearance of empathy to the point where they are no longer human beings. There are also psychological undertones, in phrases like "Mistier Neva, lower sun", which represents the sun at dawn. However, it is figuratively representing a psychological underworld. A lexical field consisting of diction such as "dead", "breathless", "mistier" and "lower sun" creates a haunting panorama, an ominous edge to the city, reflected by deep rooted feelings of anxiety, misery and horror. Akhmatova's exertion of punctuation also provides literary emphasis. Caesura is present in the form of an exclamation mark at the end of "The sentence!" The use of emphasis here imitates the sudden impact of the news on Akhmatova, a substantial blow to her soul, while also capturing momentary tension before the "floods" of tears come. The use of "flood" encapsulates her overflow of emotions as she is struck by the news.

In "Yet goes...swaying...she can still walk", there is use of caesura (this time in the form of ellipses) which portrays the persona's sluggish and wavering movements. The precariousness of her behaviour alludes to the devastating emotional battle Akhmatova has been fighting this entire time; she has been greatly wounded and barely capable of moving forwards. In contrast with '

'Dedication', 'Epilogue II' is broken into two line stanzas, with enjambment present in each stanza. This could resemble Akhmatova's memories, her series of thoughts presented in progression in order to tie together the overall message of the poem. 'Epilogue II' opens with the sentence "Again the hands of the clock near the unforgettable hour" with the key word being "unforgettable", which demonstrates the crushing presence of her experience of waiting behind prison lines, so much so that it is an inescapable memory in her mind.

Following on from stanza two, the diction "cripple" portrays the unbearable conditions the Russians have had to endure in the hopes of gaining the comfort of knowing of their loved ones' whereabouts. The use of "moribund" conveys a decline of vitality, the decline of identity, so much so that peoples' entire lives revolve around being in line. Akhmatova states in stanza four that she would like to know all the names of the prisoners, but "they" (a reference to the Russian government) have "lost the lists." This could suggest the Russian government's inhumanity in dismissing the prisoners as being completely insignificant. Alternatively, it could be signifying the unfathomably large number of prisoners, to the point where it is impossible to keep a record of all of them. In stanza five, Akhmatova expresses her poetry as a "great shroud" for the Russian people, suggesting the solace and dignity provided in a time of death. Stark contrast is created between "poor words" and "great shroud," illustrating Akhmatova's wish to convert the tragic experiences of her people into a poem which bears their everlasting consolation, to ensure that their suffering is never forgotten.

From stanza six onwards, lexical fields including " them" (in reference to the government), " always" and " everywhere" implies an omnipresence of the government in Akhmatova's mind, as their power has manifested in and permanently marked everything in her life.

The phrase " tormented mouth" emphasises the emotional affliction caused by her having to write such poems. Stanza ten's figure of speech " My last links there were broken long ago" depicts the fading of Akhmatova's connection with her past. " But here" signifies Akhmatova's desire to be commemorated outside the prison walls, to bear an inerasable legacy for the Russians and give an emblem of her suffering to the people. The repetition of " never" in " where they never, never opened doors for me" highlights the cold-heartedness of the government, and how, even after agonising for months waiting in line, the government does not consider Akhmatova or the Russian people as worthy of an explanation. Onomatopoeic words such as " clanging gate" and " woman wailing" introduce a cacophony of sounds, highlighting the torturous agony the prisoners' families encounter.

Lastly, the lines " And may the melting snow drop like tears From my motionless bronze lids" presents Akhmatova's desire to humanise her statue of commemoration, her desire for her statue to weep out of its own eyelids. This is Akhmatova expressing that statues are not just objects, they are emblems, permanent legacies, existing to forever prove that the past is not to be forgotten, despite what may come in the future. These two Akhmatova poems both communicate the perception of such unspeakable outrages that are inflicted upon people on a human level. Although they are from slightly

different perspectives, both poems encompass the unified consciousness of any person, whether he or she is a parent, a poet or anybody else. The empathy found in these poems, as well as the empathy invoked from these poems can resonate through any generation and any context, from a dictator's reign nearly a century ago to the happenings of the world we live in today. 'Requiem' and 'Epilogue II' embraces art as a form of solace and remembrance, a testimony to events that should never be forgotten.

Bibliography:

Akhmatova, Anna, 'Dedication' and 'Epilogue II' from Requiem from Selected Poems, Vintage Books 2009, translated by Thomas, D. M.