

*Out of Sixteen Portraits, One Turns to Look*

*for Anna Akhmatova*

Prison gates at this hour  
smell of sulfur and burn the tongue.

•

On the third day she gets up and makes tea.

•

As if there is something besides river to be found,  
the ice breaks up.

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A bird caught in thistle,  
thistle caught in water.

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Asia, Abyssinia, the Crimea, we are tired.

•

Sensei, all long train rides lead into a square.

•

The boulevards just swept and finished,  
the paint tasting of wax and powders.

•

The Futurists and Acmeists can leave me for dead for all I care.

•

And with “just the right figure for ballet.”

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At this hour the window she’s chosen  
for her son’s is a blank eye among blank eyes,

•

her face to him a white impression on snow.

•

And gun-shots and the shops always dark;  
a forest of suicides from factories that smell of candy.

•

I take it all back, how it seemed, how it was.

•

The river over reason is at war with sky.

•

Clock on the dresser, half-drunk glass.