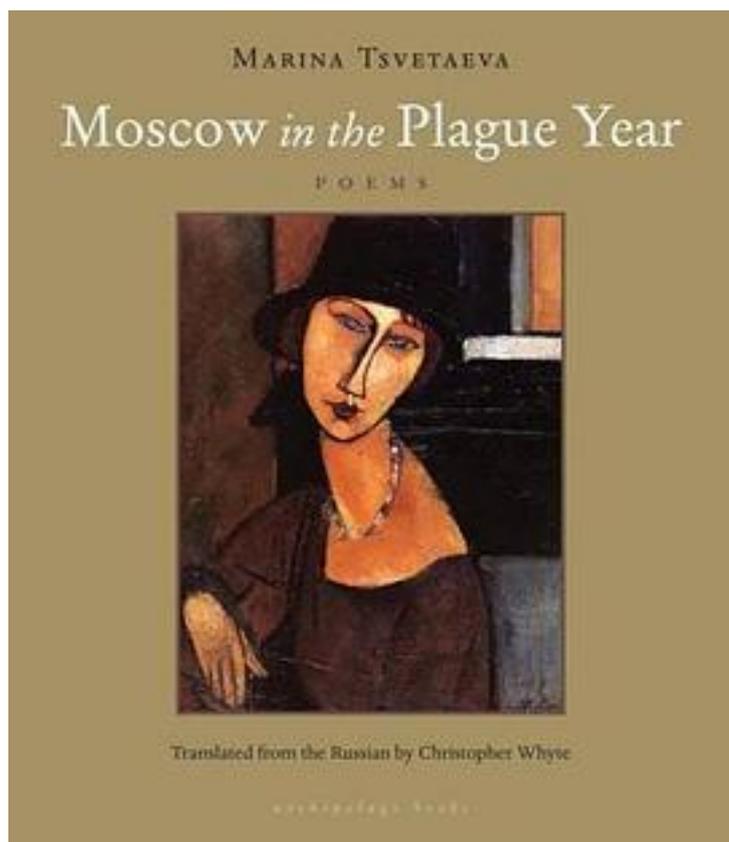


Moscow in the Plague Year



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Written during the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the Moscow famine that followed, these poems are suffused with Tsvetaeva's irony and humor, which undoubtedly accounted for her success in not only reaching the end of the plague year alive, but making it the most productive of her career. We meet a drummer boy idolizing Napoleon, an irrepressibly mischievous grandmother who refuses to apologize to God on Judgment Day, and an androgynous (and luminous) Joan of Arc.

"Represented on a graph, Tsvetaeva's work would exhibit a curve - or rather, a straight line - rising at almost a right angle because of her constant effort to raise the pitch a note higher, an idea higher ... She always carried everything she has to say to its conceivable and expressible end. In both her poetry and her prose, nothing remains hanging or leaves a feeling of ambivalence. Tsvetaeva is the unique case in which the paramount spiritual experience of an epoch (for us, the sense of ambivalence, of contradictoriness in the nature of human existence) served not as the object of expression but as its means, by which it was transformed into the material of art."
--Joseph Brodsky

While your eyes follow me into the grave, write up the whole caboodle on my cross!
'Her days began with songs, ended in tears, but when she died, she split her sides with laughter!'

--from Moscow in the Plague Year: Poems

作者介绍:

Marina Tsvetaeva was born in Moscow. Her father, Ivan Tsvetayev, was a professor of art history and the founder of the Museum of Fine Arts. Her mother Mariya, née Meyn, was a talented concert pianist. The family travelled a great deal and Tsvetaeva attended schools in Switzerland, Germany, and at the Sorbonne, Paris. Tsvetaeva started to write verse in her early childhood. She made her debut as a poet at the age of 18 with the collection Evening Album, a tribute to her childhood.

In 1912 Tsvetaeva married Sergei Efron, they had two daughters and one son. Magic Lantern showed her technical mastery and was followed in 1913 by a selection of poems from her first collections. Tsvetaeva's affair with the poet and opera librettist Sofiia Parnok inspired her cycle of poems called Girlfriend. Parnok's career stopped in the late 1920s when she was no longer allowed to publish. The poems composed between 1917 and 1921 appeared in 1957 under the title The Demesne of the Swans. Inspired by her relationship with Konstantin Rodzevich, an ex-Red Army officer she wrote Poem of the Mountain and Poem of the End.

After 1917 Revolution Tsvetaeva was trapped in Moscow for five years. During the famine one of her own daughters died of starvation. Tsvetaeva's poetry reveal her growing interest in folk song and the techniques of the major symbolist and poets, such as Aleksander Blok and Anna Akhmatova. In 1922 Tsvetaeva emigrated with her family to Berlin, where she rejoined her husband, and then to Prague. This was a highly productive period in her life - she published five collections of verse and a number of narrative poems, plays, and essays.

During her years in Paris Tsvetaeva wrote two parts of the planned dramatic trilogy. The last collection published during her lifetime, After Russia, appeared in 1928. Its print, 100 numbered copies, were sold by special subscription. In Paris the family lived in poverty, the income came almost entirely from Tsvetaeva's writings. When her husband started to work for the Soviet security service, the Russian community of Paris turned against Tsvetaeva. Her limited publishing ways for poetry were blocked and she turned to prose. In 1937 appeared MOY PUSHKIN, one of Tsvetaeva's best prose works. To earn extra income, she also produced short stories, memoirs and critical articles.

In exile Tsvetaeva felt more and more isolated. Friendless and almost destitute she returned to the Soviet Union in 1938, where her son and husband already lived. Next

year her husband was executed and her daughter was sent to a labor camp. Tsvetaeva was officially ostracized and unable to publish. After the USSR was invaded by German Army in 1941, Tsvetaeva was evacuated to the small provincial town of Elabuga with her son. In despair, she hanged herself ten days later on August 31, 1941.

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