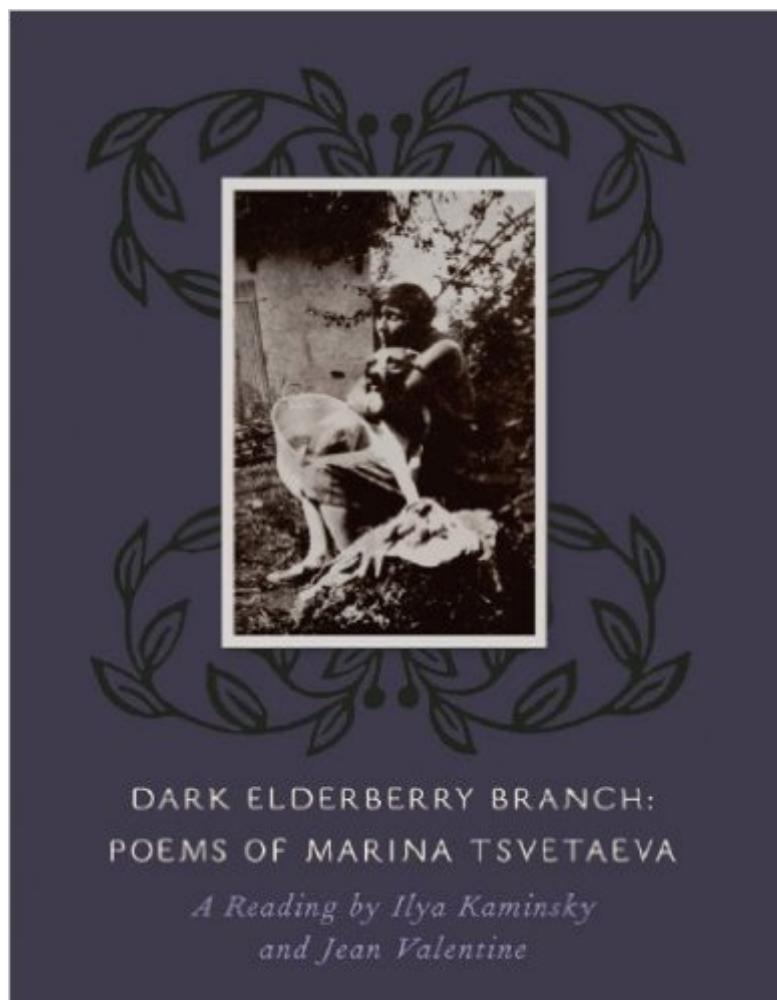


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Dark Elderberry Branch: Poems Of Marina Tsvetaeva



Synopsis

"A poet of genius."Vladimir Nabokov Via what Ilya Kaminsky and Jean Valentine call "readings"not translationsof fragments of Marina Tsvetaeva's poems and prose, Tsvetaeva's lyrical genius is made accessible and poignant to a new generation of readers. By juxtaposing fragments of her poems with short pieces of prose, we begin to know her as poet, friend, enemy, woman, lover, and revolutionary. From "Poems for Moscow (2)":

From my handstake this city not made by hands, my strange, my beautiful brother. Take it, church by churchall forty times forty churches, and flying up over them, the small pigeons; And Spassky Gatesin their flowerwhere the Orthodox take off their hats; And the Chapel of Starsrefuge chapelwhere the floor ispolished by tears; Take the circle of the five cathedrals, my soul, my holy friend.

Marina Tsvetaeva was born in Moscow in 1892 and died in 1941. Her poetry stands among the greatest works of twentieth century Russian writers. Ilya Kaminsky is the author of *Dancing in Odessa* (Tupelo Press, 2004) which won the Whiting Writers' Award, the American Academy of Arts and Letters' Metcalf Award, the Dorset Prize, and the Ruth Lilly Poetry Fellowship awarded annually by Poetry magazine. Jean Valentine won the Yale Younger Poets award for *Dream Barker* in 1965. Her eleventh book of poetry is *Break the Glass*, from Copper Canyon Press. *Door in the Mountain: New and Collected Poems 19652003* was the winner of the 2004 National Book Award for Poetry.

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Customer Reviews

This slim and lovely volume, not much thicker than a pamphlet, includes some of the best

translations of Marina Tsvetaeva I have ever seen. Her poems, written early and late, finally get their due. Also included are an introduction by Stephanie Sandler and two fine essays by the co-translator, Ilya Kaminsky. But there's a surprise: tucked away in the back of the book is a CD of most of the poems, beautifully read in Russian by Polina Barskova and Valzhyna Mort, poets themselves: see especially Barskova's *This Lamentable City: Poems of Polina Barskova* (English and Russian Edition) (2010 Subscription Series) (Tupelo Press Poetry in Translation) (translated by Kaminsky) and Mort's *Factory of Tears* (Lannan Literary Selections) (Byelorussian Edition). The only quarrel then might be that a bilingual format might have been preferable. Tsvetaeva's collected works run to hundreds of pages. (Another great translator is Angela Livingstone: see her *The Ratcatcher* (European Poetry Classics) and *Phaedra: with New Year's Letter and Other Long Poems* (which also includes the whole of the "New Year's Letter" to Rilke--passages from which figure in the volume at hand). I guess I could be greedy and ask for more, but Dark Elderberry Branch has its own sharp integrity and I most urgently recommend it.

Don't expect the usual unbearable verse translation from this book. Finally, the editors who picked texts that make sense in English! Reading this book you will meet Tsvetaeva's brilliant mind - her prosaic formulations are as stunning as her poems.

The language and sensitivity to this excellent poet's writing is remarkable. The book reveals the extraordinary life of a poet whose contribution to the world would otherwise be lost to English language readers.

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