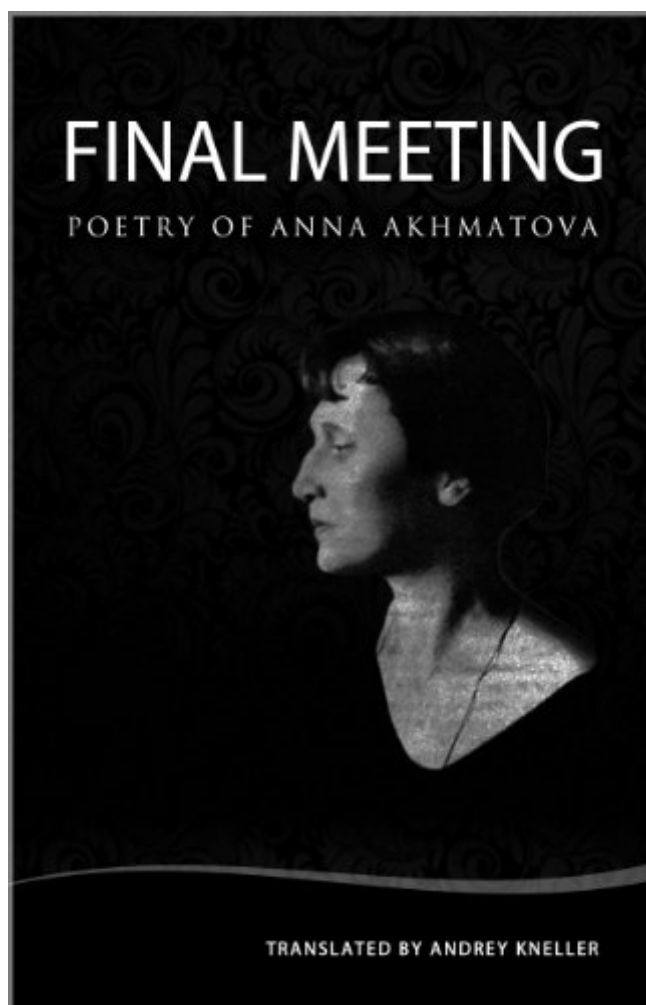


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Final Meeting: Selected Poetry Of Anna Akhmatova



Synopsis

Anna Akhmatova (June 23, 1889 - March 5, 1966) is considered by many to be one of the greatest Russian poets of the Silver Age. Her works range from short lyric love poetry to longer, more complex cycles, such as *Requiem*, a tragic depiction of the Stalinist terror. One of the forefront leaders of the Acmeism movement, which focused on rigorous form and directness of words, she was a master of conveying raw emotion in her portrayals of everyday situations. During the time of heavy censorship and persecution, her poetry gave voice and hope to the Russian people. In this dual-language selection of Anna Akhmatova's poetry, Andrey Kneller's translations capture not only the general message, but also strive to preserve the beautiful lyrical quality of the originals.

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Customer Reviews

Andrey Kneller, the translator of this collection first came to my attention through his work translating Marina Tsvetaeva *My Poems: Selected Poetry Of Marina Tsvetaeva* (English and Russian Edition) which I thought was excellent. This, therefore led me to his translations of Akhmatova, of whom I am a tremendous admirer and fan. As anticipated Kneller's translations are outstanding. Naturally some latitude is given the translator (particularly with poetry) - one of the reasons why I purchased this

collection (and the Tsvetaeva as well) is because they are dual language, an added bonus. Even expecting (and forgiving) the editorial decisions made, Kneller has truly created masterpieces of his own from Akhmatova's work. For example, "In the evening": With sadness words cannot describe, Out in the garden, music played. The frozen oysters on the plate Smelled pungently of sea and brine. He gently touched my evening dress And said, "I am a loyal friend!" And yet, the contact of his hand Felt nothing like a true caress. Thus one might pet a cat, a bird, Or watch a slender circus rider ... Beneath his golden lashes, hiding Amusement, happiness and mirth. And as the smoke diffuses idly, The doleful fiddles sing above it: "O, thank the Heavens - finally First time alone with your beloved." The original Russian doesn't quite fit, but the sense of space, time and duplicity are brilliantly captured by Kneller. I reluctantly rate it five stars, however, for the selection.

Disclosure: Mr. Kneller invited me to review his collection of translations. For several years now I have been a student of the relationship between state-making projects and state-resistant peoples, between totalitarianism and the humanities, between oppression and resistance. Naturally this means I have also been a student of Russia, her history, her politics, her literature and her language. Russian is notoriously difficult to translate--the terse, heavy sentences cluster like firs in a boreal forest, yielding their meaning to the outsider only after much practice and study, not only of the language, but of the culture, of idiom, of context. Mr. Kneller believes that translation should not only convey (as accurately as possible) idiom and meaning, but also the form in which the idiom and meaning were originally conveyed. Accordingly, Mr. Kneller's translations scan appropriately, and rhyme where they should. I can't help but feel that Akhmatova, herself the undisputed master of Acmeist poetry (concerned with form and rigor and with using words in their most direct and unsettling meaning), would be very pleased with Mr. Kneller's efforts at translation. *Final Meeting* assembles, in largely chronological order, Akhmatova's stormiest love poems, many of which are nearly haiku-like "complete fragments" of dark, rich coloration, sonorous and devastating. The work concludes with an excellently translated and annotated [Requiem], considered rightly to be Akhmatova's crowning work and one of the best, most enduring works of Soviet literature. Reviewing translations is hard work, involving the comparison of several different translated versions of poetry along with the contemplation of the poems as singular works. Mr.

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