



## Selected Poems: Marina Tsvetaeva

*Marina Tsvetaeva, David McDuff*

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During the Stalin years Russia had four great poets to voice the feelings of her oppressed people: Pasternak, Akhmatova, Mandelstam and Marina Tsvetayeva. The first two survived the terror, but Mandelstam died in a camp and Tsvetayeva was driven to hang herself in 1941.

This comprehensive selection of Tsvetayeva's poetry includes complete versions of all her major long poems and poem cycles: *Poem of the End*, *An Attempt at a Room*, *Poems to Czechia* and *New Year Letter*. It was the first English translation to use the new, definitive Russica text of her work. It also includes additional versions ascribed to F.F. Morton which first appeared in *The New Yorker*: these rhyming translations are actually the work of Joseph Brodsky (who lived at 44 Morton Street in New York).

'Tsvetayeva is one of the great poets of the century and David McDuff's translations are very good. This is all the more remarkable because, like the poems they translate, they rhyme. There are overlaps with Elaine Feinstein's excellent but unrhyming translations of the same poet, but not too many. McDuff conveys Tsvetayeva's commitment to poetry's musical force, Feinstein substitutes a beautifully nuanced syntax for music; Tsvetayeva shines and appals in both' - Martin Dodsworth, *Guardian*

'It must be said right away that those who want to have an inkling of what Tsvetayeva is actually like, and that includes her form, her rhyme, and the tone of that accompanies form and rhyme, will have to go to McDuff. His diligence with metre and rhyme is remarkably successful, and is the only proper tribute to the poet's linguistic virtuosity. Readers may find that Feinstein comes across more fluently, but that fluency is not Tsvetaevan. McDuff has caught her abruptness, her veering and tacking, and has tried to show something of the curious modern music this produces - "modern" not through free verse but by dint of straining traditional patterns to breaking point' - *Cenrastus*

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