



Art in the Light of Conscience: Eight Essays on Poetry

Marina Tsvetaeva

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Marina Tsvetaeva (1892-1941) was one of the four great Russian poets of the 20th century, along with Akhmatova, Mandelstam and Pasternak. She also wrote outstanding prose. Endowed with 'phenomenally heightened linguistic sensitivity' (Joseph Brodsky), Tsvetaeva was primarily concerned with the nature of poetic creation and what it means to be a poet. Among the most exciting of all explorations of this theme are the essays 'Art in the Light of Conscience', her spirited defence of poetry; 'The Poet on the Critic', which earned her the enmity of many; and 'The Poet and Time', the key to understanding her work. Her richly diverse essays provide incomparable insights into poetry, the poetic process, and what it means to be a poet. This book includes, among many fascinating topics, a celebration of the poetry of Pasternak ('Downpour of Light') and reflections on the lives and works of other Russian poets, such as Mandelstam and Mayakovsky, as well as a magnificent study of Zhukovsky's translation of Goethe's 'Erlking'. Even during periods of extreme personal hardship, her work retained its sense of elated energy and humour, and Angela Livingstone's translations bring the English-speaking reader as close as possible to Tsvetaeva's inimitable voice. First published in English in 1992, *Art in the Light of Conscience* includes an introduction by the translator, textual notes and a glossary, as well as revised translations of 12 poems by Tsvetaeva on poets and poetry. 'For me, there are no essays on poetry as unique, as profound, as passionate, as inspiring as these. "Art, a series of answers to which there are no questions," Tsvetaeva brilliantly asserts, and then goes on to ask questions we didn't know existed until she offered them to us, and answers to some of poetry's most enduring mysteries' – C.K. Williams.

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