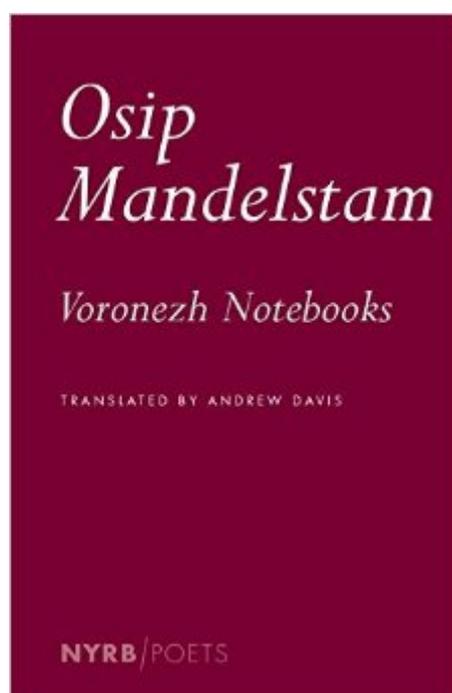


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Voronezh Notebooks



Synopsis

Osip Mandelstam is one of the greatest of twentieth-century poets and *Voronezh Notebooks*, a sequence of poems composed between 1935 and 1937 when he was living in internal exile in the Soviet city of Voronezh, is his last and most exploratory work. Meditating on death and survival, on power and poetry, on marriage, madness, friendship, and memory, challenging Stalin between lines that are full of the sights and sounds of the steppes, blue sky and black earth, the roads, winter breath, spring with its birds and flowers and bees, the notebooks are a continual improvisation and an unapologetic affirmation of poetry as life.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

For a poet living in Moscow in 1933, it was beyond foolhardy to read a self-penned poem, even to a small group of friends, representing Stalin as physically unattractive âBut around him a crowd of thin-necked henchmen, And he plays with the services of these half-men. Some are whistling, some meowing, some sniffing,â |.. He is forging his rules and decrees like horseshoes â Into groins, into foreheads, in eyes, and eyebrows. Every killing for him is delight,(tr. Dmitri Smirnov)Remarkably, it was a whole six months before Osip Mandelstam was arrested. More remarkable still, he was not immediately killed but exiled â first to the northern Urals, but he was later allowed to live in Voronezh, a not unpleasant city about 300 miles south of Moscow. There he filled three notebooks with new poems (born in 1891, he had been a published poet since 1913, but after 1928 had nothing further published in his lifetime). Or rather, his wife Nadezhda filled the notebooks (and

afterwards took very great care of them); Mandelstam composed the poems in his head and did not dictate them to Nadezhda until they were essentially complete. As evidenced by this book of 87 translated poems, between April 1935 and May 1937 he was enormously productive, at times completing new poems on an almost daily basis. Andrew Davis has himself been enormously productive in translating them all and putting in the other work required in the production of this book. Mandelstam has a reputation of being difficult, perhaps impossible, to translate satisfactorily: How has Davis done? He has wisely not attempted to retain Mandelstam's rhyme schemes, nor to maintain rhythms.

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