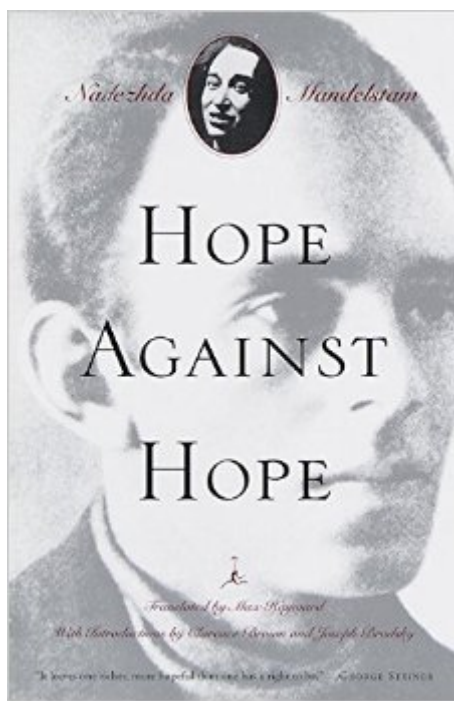


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Hope Against Hope: A Memoir



Synopsis

The story of the poet Osip Mandelstam, who suffered continuous persecution under Stalin, but whose wife constantly supported both him and his writings until he died in 1938. Since 1917 The Modern Library prides itself as The Modern Library of the World's Best Books. Featuring introductions by leading writers, stunning translations, scholarly endnotes and reading group guides. Production values emphasize superior quality and readability. Competitive prices, coupled with exciting cover design make these an ideal gift to be cherished by the avid reader. Of the eighty-one years of her life, Nadezhda Mandelstam spent nineteen as the wife of Russia's greatest poet in this century, Osip Mandelstam, and forty-two as his widow. The rest was childhood and youth." So writes Joseph Brodsky in his appreciation of Nadezhda Mandelstam that is reprinted here as an Introduction. Hope Against Hope was first published in English in 1970. It is Nadezhda Mandelstam's memoir of her life with Osip, who was first arrested in 1934 and died in Stalin's Great Purge of 1937-38. Hope Against Hope is a vital eyewitness account of Stalin's Soviet Union and one of the greatest testaments to the value of literature and imaginative freedom ever written. But it is also a profound inspiration--a love story that relates the daily struggle to keep both love and art alive in the most desperate circumstances.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Only a process that is very beautiful and very terrible could produce this book: the anguish of two

human souls being tormented by a cruel, fiendishly clever, and virtually all-powerful State determined to murder both the body and soul of its victims. Whether we deserve to benefit as readers from the terrible tempering endured by the poet Osip Mandelstam and his widow Nadezhda Mandelstam is a matter that can be easily determined: we do not deserve it. We are not worthy of the Mandelstams. They belong to a very select group of all the human beings who have ever lived, most of whom we will never know. Thanks to her memoir, we do know Nadezhda and Osip. If Osip's great characteristic was his commitment to truth, Nadezhda's was her endurance (if this sounds dismissive recall that the New Testament repeatedly includes endurance as one of a short list of authentic signs of the divine Spirit). Her personal survival made possible the survival of (most) of Osip's poetry, and of the story of their lives, preserved in this unique memoir. Wordsworth defined poetry as "emotion recollected in tranquility", and this memoir has something deeper than tranquility to it, a profound serenity, a luminous sadness, a fusion of love and truth which is the pivot on which human history revolves. It is clear from reading this book that Osip was one of those described in the 11th chapter of Hebrews as those "of whom the world was not worthy". What better way to understand the industrial scale barbarisms of the twentieth century than to read about how they were observed and interpreted through the sensibilities of great poets and writers?

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