

Title: Bella Akhmadulina: To and From Translations

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In translating, Bella Akhmadulina (1937–2010) seeks emotional and artistic justification of the target poet's trust: "...I believe that translation is an expression of huge trust between two poets, where one of them initiates the other to his innermost sacred mystery." Her most numerous translations are from Georgian: nearly 200 poems of over 16 poets. Many were friends and the subjects in her original poems, where Georgia permeates the mythopoetic canvas of Akhmadulina's early verse, providing premature spring warmth, rejuvenation, and new impressions for her speaker following a Northern snowbound, intensely inspired winter of composing. Georgian and the friends, peopling Akhmadulina's own poems, forge a singular symbiosis between the translations and the original poetry.

Akhmadulina relied on linear translations with readings by native speakers and on written phonetic transcriptions, as found in Anna Akhmatova's archives. Akhmadulina translated four Armenian poets, most extensively from the two great older classics, for whom she felt affinity, but never met—Hovanes Tumanian (17 poems) and Avetik Isaakian (24 poems).

This paper proposes to investigate Akhmadulina's translating approach to several Armenian poems to establish whether, like Pasternak, she remains faithful to the poems by recreating "contemporary Russian poems kindred for contemporary Russian readers" through her own emotions and style; or by closely following the formal aspects of the Armenian she sacrifices the reception of inherent artistic aspects in the Russian rendition. To paraphrase Barry Scherr (on Shelley, Pasternak and Balmont), does Akhmadulina render most clearly aspects of the poems consonant to her inclinations and alter the original where it does not correspond? Also to be explored is how these translations influence Akhmadulina's original verse.